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FACSIMILE OF HUMOROUS NOTE OF LINCOLN'S.





de Temple Biographies

Edited by Dugald Macfadyen, M.A.

Abraham Lincoln

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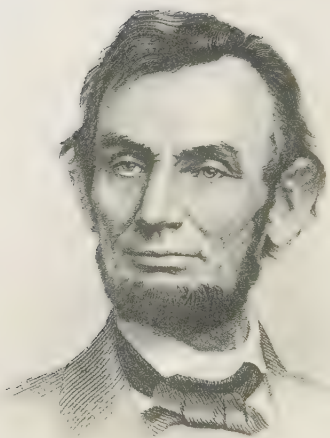
ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

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*A. Lincoln*

# ABRAHAM LINCOLN

BY

HENRY BRYAN BINNS

"The grandest figure yet on all the crowded  
canvas of the nineteenth century."—WHITMAN



WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

1907

LONDON: J. M. DENT & CO.

NEW YORK: E. P. DUTTON & CO.





1905, were further extended to ten volumes: these, of course, furnish much of the material for my work. A selection from them, with an introduction by Mr Bryce, has been recently added to *Everyman's Library*, and Lincoln's speeches are thus at last accessible to the general public on this side of the Atlantic.

I may, perhaps, be allowed to note that, with all its deficiencies, this is, as far as I am aware, the first serious attempt made by an Englishman to portray on any full-sized canvas the greatest of the popular statesmen of the last century, the most notable figure among the leaders of the English-speaking democracy. I have not attempted to do more than to suggest, by way of background, the events amongst which he lived. Even an outline of the complex action of the Civil War, would only, as I think, have confused the picture of the man which I have tried to draw.

H. B. B.

LETCHWORTH, *June* 30, 1907.





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TO MY FATHER



## Prefatory Note

MR RITCHIE'S *List of Lincolniana in the Library of Congress* (1906) extends to 86 pages, and contains perhaps one thousand entries. It is obvious, therefore, that a great bulk of material has been accumulated, both for the assistance and confusion of the biographer. I do not pretend to have read, or even to have glanced over, any but a fraction of the books and pamphlets which this list represents, or to have followed Lincoln's fame through the pages of all contemporary commentators and critics, yet I have endeavoured to inform myself adequately on all the significant facts bearing upon the subjects which the present volume discusses.

The material for the Life of Lincoln is not very evenly distributed over the several periods, and there are serious gaps and deficiencies, both in material and in evidence. It is to be feared that these are now little likely to be filled. Careful inquirers appear to have repeatedly covered the ground, and later gleaners cannot now hope for much of moment. The deficiencies are most serious in relation to the character of his parents, his own early years, the love passages of his early manhood, the most intimate of his friendships, and his domestic life.



But the general outlines, and the features of his character are not in doubt. For them, we have his own words, and an admirable series of portraits extending over the last seven years of his life, besides the evidence of a large number of intelligent witnesses. The chief difficulty of the biographer lies in balancing the continually conflicting statements of previous writers. Part of this contradiction is, of course, due to the personal equation, and part to the extreme singularity of the subject of their study, but part results also from changes in the character, or at least in the outward expression, of the man himself, under the greatly altered circumstances of the last four years of his life.

Among the many lives and studies of Lincoln to which this book is under obligation, I may mention especially those of Nicolay and Hay, of Herndon and Weik, of J. T. Morse, and of Ida M. Tarbell; but also those of F. B. Carpenter, J. G. Holland, I. N. Arnold, Noah Brooks, W. H. Lamon, Norman Hapgood, W. E. Curtis, J. H. Barrett, R. H. Browne, E. P. Oberholzer, F. T. Hill, A. Rothschild, H. B. Stowe, C. G. Leland; and the Reminiscences of H. C. Whitney, J. R. Gilmore, and L. E. Chittenden. I am also much indebted to J. F. Rhodes' "*History of the United States from the Compromise of 1850*," and to Gov. Ford's *History of Illinois*.

Messrs Nicolay and Hay collected the Works of Abraham Lincoln in two volumes in 1894, which, in

## Chapter I

# Beginnings

Introductory — Origins of the Family — Early years in Kentucky —  
Migration to Indiana — Life at Gentryville — Begins anew in  
Illinois.

FOR the great majority of those who are not Americans, the story of the New World is symbolized, if it is not summed up, in three illustrious names—Columbus, Washington, and Lincoln. It is true that other figures are visible, but rather as shadows, than as historical persons. And of these three, all but the last are now so heavily cloaked in legend that their faces are hardly to be recognized. Even that of Abraham Lincoln, as plain and full of character as any man's, has been already changed, and in a sense, transfigured. To many who have "fastened their eyes upon him," as to those at Antioch who looked upon the first Christian martyr, his face has become "as it had been the face of an angel." The extraordinary part he played in the drama of his nation's life, and especially in the act of Emancipation, read in the light of his humble birth and of his tragic death, has made Lincoln something more than a great public character. He has become a national possession, and as such the outlines of his story have inevitably been drawn by the hand of national sentiment. Like Columbus and Washington,

he too has become, for the general, a symbol and type of his people.

But while America may seek and find in this nationalized portrait, the face of one whom she delights to call "the first American," and while those of us who are not Americans, may also see in that face, as in perhaps no other, an indication of the meaning and purpose of the Republic in the middle of the nineteenth century, yet it is time the world should be able to look at him from a point of view more human and universal. "He was a man, take him for all in all:" and a man whose character and story contributes something original to our common stock of manhood.

We cannot then allow America to monopolise Abraham Lincoln. Indeed, it would be absurd, if it were possible, to suppose that the most typical citizen of the most cosmopolitan of States, had any other country than the world.

From another point of view, the English have a claim upon him prior even to the American; for if in tracing back his path to its starting place, we pause at his first home in Kentucky, we must there take up the quest again, till we find ourselves among the Lincolns on this side of the sea in some farmstead of East Anglia.

In spirit, as by origin, he is of that household of liberty which sojourned for so many centuries in this England of ours; his republicanism comes of the stock of that of our Pims and Hampdens, it is of the same spirit as are the songs of his favourite Burns; while, in spite of all that is original and unexpected in him, yet essentially, in temper and sentiment, he is unmistakably a Briton. The best of his papers and addresses

have become an inalienable part of that English literature which is the common possession of a people who share too intimately both in blood and aspiration—the greatest of all bonds—to be sundered by anything that is less vital than they. And in his own person he presents one of the most striking examples of our ultimate identity of purpose. During his presidency, the relations between the two countries were severely strained by the incidence of a war which proved disastrous to one of the principal branches of English industry. But it was at this period, when thousands of the men of Lancashire were thrown out of employment, and with their wives and children to the number of half a million were cast upon charity by the blockading of the cotton ports, that our northern artizans proclaimed their faith in Lincoln, and their recognition of the fact that it was their battle he was fighting across the sea.

During those dark days the portrait of John Bright, the English tribune of the people, was one of the two that adorned the business room of the American President. He knew, and the true leaders of the English working-men knew, that the cause of the peoples is one; that in preserving and renewing the life of the American republic, in breaking for ever the power of slavery within it, he was, as he so often repeated, upholding the cause of freedom for the whole world, and nobly saving "the last, best hope of earth."

In the largest sense of the phrase, a sense in which it has been applicable to very few, Abraham Lincoln was a "man of the people."

Few have ever lived more continuously in the

eye of day. His life seems to have always been peculiarly open to inspection and a sort of publicity. Yet he never became common-place. He remains among the always unexpected persons whose thoughts and actions are the reverse of trite or obvious.

And thus, while the volumes which have been written about him already form "a literature," we, their readers, remain unsatisfied. The man himself baffles us. Before his portrait we still stand curious. No one is able to explain this man so that we can say to ourselves with flattering satisfaction, "Yes, we understand him very well," and so pass by. We read what has been written in explanation, and we know that neither we nor the writers really understand. So we come back to every word and instance of the man himself.

Some may ascribe this to the failure of his biographers; but it is really an evidence of their honesty, and is far better than a delusive success. Abraham Lincoln must remain, for all but the very few who are by nature of his spiritual kindred, an unsolved enigma. We can trace his history through almost all its details; we can question scores of witnesses who were in close relation to him; we can analyse the writings and actions in which he expressed himself. But at the end, we confess we are not satisfied with the explanations we have to offer. Like any other greatest man, he eludes our categories.

For all that, the inexplicable man himself with his boldly-cut characteristics, standing out clear and dominant against the background of events, is singularly satisfying. If we cannot explain him, neither can we really misunderstand him. He is

always himself, and his humanity is so large that he appeals to us all. Not indeed, as a mere Sunday-school hero, or as a conventional "example to the young"—they little understand him who would thus tell his story—but as a man of like passions with us all, a man more responsive than others to some, at least, of the claims and possibilities of life, more burdened than others by destiny.

In these pages I have tried to bring the reader to a position from which he may see this tall figure in what has seemed to me to be its most striking and characteristic aspect. His own public and private utterances, the more important of which are now accessible to all, read with the history of the time will supplement this volume with much significant material which could not be included in it. But here, I trust, the reader may find the man, Abraham Lincoln, whom to know was to love.

It was in 1637—the year of Hampden's refusal to pay ship-money—that three brothers of the name of Lincoln sailed from Bristol to settle in the colony of Massachusetts. A century and a half later, while the colonists, under the leadership of a Virginian soldier, were still engaged in declaring their independence of the Mother-country, one of the descendants of these brothers crossed the mountains that separated Virginia from the rich Indian lands to the westward. The Lincolns, then, may fairly be described as among the foremost of American pioneers.

During that interval of a century and a half, Abraham Lincoln's ancestors—all belonging to the



independent working-class, as distinguished from mere wage-earners—had sojourned first in one colony and then in another, slowly but steadily moving South and West. In Pennsylvania they had prospered, and one of them, at least, was associated with the Quakers of that State. In some brief autobiographical notes Lincoln remarks that his ancestors, when they left Berks County, Pennsylvania, and removed into Virginia, were Quakers. The allusion has significance, not merely because it is the only reference to any religious body in these notes, but because it suggests an interesting spiritual affiliation to which we shall refer again later.

John Lincoln's "Quakerism"—it is not clear that he was actually a member of the Society of Friends—did not prevent one of his sons from serving in the Revolutionary War; nor, in spite of the traditions of Penn's friendship with the Red-men, could it save another from death at the hands of the Indians.

This Abraham Lincoln, the elder, sold his Virginian farm, and about 1781, took the Wilderness-trail for Kentucky. He was one of the first 20,000 of those who crossed the Cumberland Ridge, attracted by the fertility of a country whose Indian name of "the dark and bloody land" so well suggests the years of its conquest and settlement under Boone and other leaders as adventurous as he.<sup>1</sup>

Abraham Lincoln took with him a wife and three sons when he crossed the mountains, and all shared together for some seven years in the hardships of that

<sup>1</sup> One of these pushed on beyond the borders of Kentucky into the country of the Illinois, "the land of full-grown men," and with almost incredible daring and determination captured it from its British rulers to become in future years the home of one of the greatest of American statesmen.



wild life. Then, as they were at work on their clearing outside the friendly shelter of Hughes Station, they were surprised by Indians, the father being killed and the others only narrowly escaping.

Old Abraham Lincoln may have been a prosperous settler, but in the nature of things he could leave but little property behind him, beyond certain wide tracts of uncleared land, a couple of horses, a few head of cattle, some tools, guns, and the simplest of household necessities. And these passed, by the prevailing law of Virginia, to his eldest son, Mordecai.

His widow removed further westward into what is now the centre of the State, and here her youngest son, Tom, early inured to labour, and without any of the advantages of education, became in due time a country carpenter. Round-faced and compact in build, with grey eyes, a prominent nose, and coarse black hair, he grew to be a favourite among his neighbours, for his kindly good-nature, companionableness, and honesty. He seems to have been endowed with some of the best qualities of the pioneer, and to have possessed an obstinacy of purpose, a slow, sturdy determination, and personal rectitude, which have been too easily forgotten. He was probably of a lethargic temperament; there is a tradition that he was at times subject to fits of depression, and that at rare intervals, and under extreme provocation, he exhibited a certain violence of unrestrained passion. His choice of two noble women as his successive partners in life, indicates some corresponding quality of character.<sup>1</sup> But he belonged to a class which could not thrive in the

<sup>1</sup> See H. M. Jenkin's, "The Mother of Lincoln" (*Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, for July 1900).

Southern States, the class of free labourers and artizans. In the North he would doubtless have become, if not as prosperous as other men of equal skill and rectitude—for he seems to have had less than the average of ambition—yet free at least from actual poverty or dependence upon others. No man in his condition of life need, at that time, have remained really poor in the North. But in the South it was different. Slavery and independent labour could not prosper side by side ; and as the gentry of Virginia brought their “property” into Kentucky, the descendants of the first hardy settlers either rose upon the new flood into affluence, were swept on before it further West, or, if they remained, sank into insignificance and social ostracism as “crackers” or “poor white trash.”

During Thomas Lincoln's youth a great change came over the new land. He had been born in 1778, a year after his more successful contemporary, Henry Clay, whose name is so intimately associated with all the fortunes of Kentucky. Clay came over the mountains twenty years later, when the population of Kentucky already numbered nearly 200,000, one-fifth of whom were slaves. Almost immediately, he became prosperous as an eloquent lawyer in courts whose principal business was the settlement of conflicting land claims. In those twenty years, Kentucky had passed out of the hands of the pioneers. Other men with other manners were taking the places of the old frontier leaders with their coon-skin caps, their tasselled shirts, their moccasins and fringed leggings ; their long rifles, powder-horns and axes ; their bold, free manners, their rough honesty and justice, and their vices of cruelty and dissipation. The trickster

and land-speculator had followed so fast upon their heels, that they had often been unable to retain for themselves the very lands they had won and cleared at so much peril. With these came also the lawyer and the judge, the surveyor, and the landed gentry.

Much of the old social system disappeared with the passing of the frontiersman. But even when buffalo and Red-skin had become little more than legends, when the women of Kentucky were ceasing to treasure Indian scalps among their trophies, and the towns of Lexington and Louisville were centres of social and even literary interest, whisky-drinking and boisterous merriment still ruled at all festivities, and personal prowess was the surest path to popularity.

A little before midsummer, 1806, this noisy mirth-making seems to have found full scope at the wedding of Thomas Lincoln and his first-cousin, Nancy Hanks. The rude fare and roaring fun associated by tradition with this occasion, even if they could be transferred to this cold type and paper by the pen of a Rabelais, might only obscure the two figures whom we see but dimly in its midst—the young carpenter and his bride. From this distance she looks pathetically out of place at that noisy wedding feast, given by the well-to-do guardian of this, the youngest member of a large and impoverished family of orphans.

A mystery has always hung over the name and story of Nancy Hanks.<sup>1</sup> There is, however, clear documentary evidence that Nancy was the youngest child of Joseph Hanks of Nelson County, Kentucky, whose wife was "Nanny" Shipley, daughter of Robert Shipley of Amelia County, Virginia, probably

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A.

a Quaker, and the sister of Mary, wife of Abraham Lincoln the elder. There were three other sisters, Lucy, who married Richard Berry; Sarah, married to Robert Mitchell; and Elizabeth, who became Mrs Thomas Sparrow. These all removed into Kentucky, and the Hankses, Berrys, and Sparrows all play their part in the earlier chapters of Lincoln's life. Joseph Hanks, Nancy's father, who died when she was nine years old bequeathing to her "one heifer yearling called Peidy," may have had some Welsh blood in his veins.<sup>1</sup> He left eight children, and the widow being poor, Nancy was brought up by her aunt Lucy, Mrs Richard Berry, at whose house, near Beechland, her wedding subsequently took place.

Nancy herself would seem to have been at the time of their marriage a woman of twenty-three, of great charm, with dark hair and dark vivacious eyes, whose conversation was brightened by frequent sallies of fun. She had besides, according to her son, a strong memory, acute judgment and cool, heroic temper, and a nature highly intellectual. She seems to have been too sensitive a creature for the hard life of a pioneer; and the vein of humour may well have been associated, as her health failed, with a nervous and melancholy temperament.

It will be noted that she was Thomas Lincoln's first cousin, both their mothers being Shipleys. This double intermarriage with members of a well-known Quaker family again recalls the affiliation to which I have already referred.

The pair settled at first in Elizabethtown, where

<sup>1</sup> See H. M. Jenkins, *op. cit.*, and *Historical Collections relating to Gwynedd*.





LOG CABIN IN WHICH LINCOLN WAS BORN. REBUILT FROM ORIGINAL LOGS.

Thomas Lincoln was a carpenter ; but he soon afterwards resolved to eke out his earnings by the clearing of a farm. It was not a successful venture ; and his family can have derived little benefit of any kind from his removal out of the friendly village to the somewhat desolate region, a dozen miles away, which he had selected. It was there, in his cabin, three miles from Hodgenville, that, on February 12th 1809,<sup>1</sup> his second child, Abraham, was born.

As far as we can tell, little Abe's inheritance was of that "honest poverty" that need not hang its head. The comparative prosperity of his grandfather in the years before he crossed the mountains, and before the long-protracted war which had ruined so many a Virginian family, was so far forgotten that it was not even a legend to the child. His parents were poor among a poor people. But doubtless he was well content in his home by Nolin Creek, playing in and out of his father's workshop, and taking part in his mother's butter-making and spinning.

When he was four years old the family crossed the ridge to the northward to another farm in a more fertile situation. But it lay so low between the hills that it was subject to disastrous flooding by the freshets after heavy rains. Here, during the next three years, he began to make himself useful to his father in a hundred ways about both farm and workshop. And under his mother's guidance, and with the very irregular and limited assistance of certain itinerant teachers, he subsequently learnt to read and write. In this respect he soon outstripped his father, who, if he could sign his name, yet always found his

<sup>1</sup> The birthday also of Charles Darwin.



hammer much handier than his pen. Indeed, although Thomas Lincoln assigned much of his own poverty to lack of education, and upon that score had a strong theoretical belief in its value, he was, in practice, sceptical about anything beyond the obviously useful rules of arithmetic. Book-learning seemed to tend perilously to waste of time upon mere stories, with consequent restlessness and general dissipation of energy. The boy was quick-witted, and soon had gained knowledge enough—according to his father's standards—while he was too likely a lad and too willing, to be spared from the always pressing tasks of a struggling farmer.

Thomas Lincoln did not prosper at Knob Creek ; and when, after a spring planting of his three fields, a torrent from the hills, unheralded by any rain in the valley, swept away, not only his seed, but the very soil in which it was sown, he seems to have despaired of his second farm. Nor was the peril from flood the only one that overhung him ; the title to his land does not appear to have been secure, and in the autumn of 1816, he relinquished his clearing and left Kentucky forever.

Henry Clay in the meanwhile, had risen to be a great political leader. The eloquent Kentucky lawyer had become speaker of the lower House of Congress, and was the idol of the younger Republicans. They styled him already the "Statesman of the West." During Thomas Lincoln's forlorn struggle at Knob Creek, Clay's fiery eloquence had carried his countrymen into the second war with Great Britain. His popularity caused him to be chosen as one of the four Commissioners sent to Europe to negotiate the



ensuing peace, a peace which his proud, impetuous spirit was the last to accept. There is no figure of the time more fascinating than that of this gallant "Harry of the West," whose personal influence over his contemporaries can scarcely be exaggerated, and who remained to the end of his life—with the possible exception of Jackson—the greatest political power in the Western States, and above all, in the life of Abraham Lincoln.

The Lincolns' migration across the Ohio river into the Indiana timber was a more serious undertaking than that to Knob Creek, and hardly more fortunate in its issue. For a part of the 80 or 90 miles they traversed, the travellers had to cut their waggon-way through the forest; and from this time on, for many years, the boy was never long without an axe in his hand. Arrived at their destination, the new farm had to be cleared and fenced, and the new house built, all entailing heavy and determined toil.

The home was indeed the poorest Nancy Lincoln had ever called her own; a "half-faced camp" open on one side to the weather save for a curtain of skins. But she had had a long training in the painful practice of poverty, and this thin-breasted, stooping woman, who could handle a gun at need, was not one to complain. Their circumstances slowly improved, and after the first winter the family moved into a cabin, in whose loft the boy slept upon a mattress of leaves. Doubtless the wilder life with its forest episodes and adventures was more than ever to his mind, as long as food was plentiful. But, though there was game of all sorts about them, bear and venison, and wild turkey, there were too many busy days when the table

boasted only its dull staple dish of potatoes or Indian corn. Perhaps, even worse to the boy than the occasional scarcity of food was the continual excess of labour. He was old for his years and very strong ; and as we have seen, his father was too poor and too hard pressed by necessity to excuse his sturdy son. There was scant time to spare for books on Little Pigeon Creek, though his mother was eager enough for him to learn. But she, poor woman, probably weakened by incipient consumption, seems to have succumbed to one of those malignant, malarial fevers which were then rife in that part of the country.

With final injunctions that they should worship God and be good to one another, she left her forlorn little family and her own hard lot in the autumn of 1818.

For about a year they struggled on together as best they might, the father, son, and elder sister Nancy, and an easy-going nondescript cousin about twenty years of age, one Dennis Hanks. Then Thomas Lincoln made his way back over the difficult tracks through the forest to Elizabethtown, where a girl he had formerly loved had now become a widow in comparatively comfortable circumstances. Her he married in December 1819, and brought back with her three children and her household gear to his Indiana cabin. The new mother, though of a different type, was a fit successor to the old ; a handsome, sprightly woman of thrift, character and a large heart. Under her decisive influence the conditions of life in that desolate household were improved as far as poverty and the back-woods permitted, and lost henceforward much of their aspect of sordidness.

The hard life of the pioneer brings him continually face to face with death. Before they left Kentucky, the Lincolns had already buried an infant son, over whose fate the mother seems to have brooded long. The mysterious fever, to which she herself fell a victim, devastated the whole district, and the carpenter had to make many a rough coffin besides that for his dead wife.

Hers had been a bald and lonely burying; no preacher was there to represent the communion of mourners in every age, or to offer words of comfort. There were, indeed, few ministers among the frontiersmen, and it was months before one could be found to conduct a service over her grave. These bare facts of his early life show how, at ten years old, the lad had begun to study the book of Tragedy with its vivid pictures. He appears to have inherited an imaginative temperament from his mother—at seven years he seemed already “considerin’ and old like” to the neighbours—and this tendency must have been nourished at the cost of other sides of his character by such events as I have narrated. His constitution was, moreover, saturated with the malaria of that low-lying riverside locality, which further disposed him to a morbid intensity of feeling. Surrounded by the fever-haunted forest, and by all the mysteries of death and the Unknown, made ever more mysterious by the ignorance and superstition of the forest-folk, it is little wonder that Lincoln’s childhood appears to have been coloured by melancholy and dark abstraction. He must already have been often withdrawn from the outer world into that of his own sad and secret thoughts.

But while his melancholy was probably, in this

early period, so strong and dominant a mood as to be almost an obsession, we must not conceive of him as a boy wholly isolated from others and absorbed either in his own thoughts or in the woes of a retentive imagination. In a healthy nature, the sheer reaction from such moods is very strong, reaction of abandonment to that reckless, harmless, irresponsible mirth which in later years his familiars knew so well. The wholesome influence of his new mother, who, as he once said, did more than any one to make a man of him, must henceforward have been of the greatest help in steadying and balancing his character, while his own quick interest in life and events grew continually with the unfolding of his powers.

Withal, he was grave and wise for his years, more sensitive than other boys, and early a favourite among the women of the neighbouring settlement of Gentryville. He was warm-hearted too, and towards those weaker than himself, and to all creatures in misfortune from whatever cause, increasingly pitiful, chivalrous and gentle. Like other boys on the frontier he learnt to shoot, and brought down his first wild turkey in merest childhood; but he seems to have disliked the solitudes of the hunter, to have used the rifle with some reluctance, and to have found little pleasure in killing anything. He preferred to employ his school-boy's pen and his precocious eloquence against war, intemperance, and the several forms of torture to which, like other boys, his companions were thoughtlessly addicted. He once expounded the truth that, to the ant, its life is as sweet as ours, and he could no more stand by and see the lads ply a mud-turtle with hot coals to make it put out its head, than he

could be content to leave the village drunkard to freeze in the ditch. Both his indignation and his sympathy were thoroughly effective. In either case his strong young arms came promptly to the rescue. Kind as he was, and by preference a peace-maker, his kindness was not such as could be imposed upon. Like his father, he could and did defend his own right, and more than once or twice, as need arose, he summarily routed the bully and aggressor. In the society of Gentryville there was no plainer road to popularity than that of success in physical contests. Young Lincoln set out upon it early, and travelled along it far.

As a fighter he was not less ready with his wits than with his fists, and soon established his pre-eminence in this as in the other method of punishment and defence, among such as were able to appreciate it. He was the clever fellow of the neighbourhood, the one among all the boys who, in spite of the most meagre opportunities, was eager for education, and who, without being quick to acquire, was thorough, and could make good use of all he learnt. He had, moreover, an exceptional memory and remarkable power of concentration. Best of all, he was so determined that he did not count the cost of knowledge. And the cost was not light ; his mind worked slowly, and though it never lost what it once acquired, each acquisition had to be won by strenuous effort. He was his own principal schoolmaster ; for, as he afterwards estimated, all the days of his irregular attendance at such very elementary schools as the frontier settlements could offer never reached the total of a single year.

At home, even with the help of his step-mother, who continually encouraged him, circumstances were adverse to his desire for scholarship. The household, which had increased to nine persons, belonging to four different families, was huddled together in the one common room of the cabin, the scene of all the household operations. Here, when the day's work was over and the evening meal was done, the father and the two elder cousins, Dennis and John Hanks, sat over the blazing logs talking together and telling interminable yarns. It was only when the others were out or after they had gone to bed, that there was any quiet; and then, by the dull light of the embers or by the blaze of spice-wood bushes, the lad would work out his arithmetic exercises with a burnt stick on the wooden shovel. At other times he would take a home-made candle up into his loft, to pore, while the light lasted, over his well-thumbed *Life of Henry Clay*, Weems's *Washington*—the Washington "who never told a lie"<sup>1</sup>—or *Æsop's Fables*, making careful notes in some precious copy-book of all that struck his fancy; putting the volume reluctantly away into its nook beneath the shingles till the first dawn-

<sup>1</sup> He became the possessor of this book, which undoubtedly exercised a great influence over him, in a characteristic way. He had borrowed it from an employer, a certain Josiah Crawford. While in his possession the volume was spoiled by wet, and Crawford assessed the damage as equivalent to three days' labour at pulling fodder. Abe paid the fine and became owner of the book; but he retained a not unnatural dislike of Mr Crawford, on whom he wrote some satirical doggerel verses. Mrs Crawford was a woman of education, and a good friend both to Abe and his sister, who repaid her kindness by devotion. Among other local friends are recorded the names of David Turnham, the constable, and John Baldwin, the blacksmith. Judge Pitcher, who lived at Rockport, subsequently lent him law books.



light glimmered through their chinks and awoke his mind anew to its insatiable hunger.

He seems to have been well drilled in the Bible by his mother, and now, besides the books I have already mentioned, he devoured the dictionary, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Pilgrim's Progress*, a history of the United States, and such other works as the neighbourhood could offer. All through the summer days he would carry a book or newspaper about with him, taking a turn at it whenever he found opportunity. This book-hunger often interfered with his labour—which he probably loved as little as do other clever lads—and became a source of friction between him and his father. For young Lincoln was an invaluable assistant, whether as a rough carpenter in and about Gentryville, as a labourer on the farm, or as a runner of errands; and he was hardly less valuable let out as a hired hand to some neighbour to plough, chop firewood, butcher hogs, or split fencing rails.

Even as a youth Lincoln presented an astonishing figure. He shot up early, and at eighteen stood six feet four in his buckskins and moccasins. He was ungainly as well as tall, and, withal, most homely to look upon. His big, protruding ears, standing out from his head, his mop of stiff dark brown hair which looked as though it had never known a brush, his grey eyes, his large, uncompromising nose and big mouth, with humorous hanging underlip, crowned a stalky, big-boned figure, roughly clad in deer-hide coat and breeches which he continued more and more to outgrow till at last a gap of bare bluish shins was exposed above the moccasins on his feet. This odd being became very familiar to the people of Gentryville. Mr Jones, the

village storekeeper, subscribed for a weekly paper, which was read in common and discussed about his doorway and counter; Abe, though the youngest, being the most eager of the group of village politicians. As soon as he was able he subscribed for a paper himself.

Under the influence of Mr Jones and his friends, Lincoln espoused the cause of Andrew Jackson, Henry Clay's successful rival, and the most powerful and picturesque personality then on the field of American politics, the idol and oracle of the frontiersmen. In the presidential contest of 1824, Jackson of Tennessee, although he had received the largest number of electoral votes, had failed of a clear majority, and the election had been decided in favour of Adams of Massachusetts by the House of Representatives. This decision was largely due to the action of Clay, and resulted in the open and bitter hostility of these two great Western leaders. Young Lincoln's sympathy was naturally enough with Jackson as against Adams, who was believed to represent an element in American politics jealous of the development and democracy of the West.

Jackson was possessed by intense conviction and had a remarkable insight into character, was a born and tried fighter, a master and ruler of men. Though autocratic and personally indifferent to constitutional forms, he was yet, in a sense, conservative, and was above all things devoted to the national idea. He was incorruptible, without fear, and without personal vices. His will was law for all who loved and feared and followed him. Lincoln always retained his admiration for the first Western President, though



he early and entirely separated himself from Jackson's party.

The political discussions at Jones's store, with their opportunities for debate, were supplemented by the trials before the local "squire," and the more important ones for the county held at Boonville Court-house, whither the lad would often repair. The Court-house was fifteen miles from Gentryville, and a mere log barn, boasting at the best one common retiring room for judge, clerk, and jury. The bench, to accommodate three, was raised on a platform at one end of the building; counsel occupied a settee, while the clerk had a table below it. The court was separated from the general public by a long boom, fastened with withes, across the house. Under such conditions the superficial dignity and ceremonial of the law were certainly not in evidence; but none the less, justice was sought and done, and the logic and eloquence of the lawyer was seen to advantage.

It was undoubtedly in this building that young Lincoln's own ambition was fired, and notably, as he himself recalled in after years, by the defence of a man under trial for murder by a Mr Breckinridge. This gentleman afterwards happened to call on the President in Washington, when Lincoln recalled the occasion, saying warmly, "I felt that, if I could ever make as good a speech as that, my soul would be satisfied." The young enthusiast is said to have offered his congratulations upon the spot to the eloquent advocate, much to the latter's amusement.

Indiana had been admitted as a State into the Union in the spring preceding the Lincolns' immigration, and had since then increased very rapidly in population.

When Abraham was sixteen, and deep in politics, the Gentryville district must have been mildly interested in the socialist experiment of Robert Owen at New Harmony, not many miles distant. Its short history of great hopes speedily overtaken by fraud, dissension, and disaster, doubtless formed one of his first practical object lessons in political theory. It is interesting to note that Robert Dale Owen, the son of the founder, lived in the State, and became actively engaged there in social reform as well as in the journalistic discussion of free thought. He subsequently became a notable figure in the political life of Indiana, which he represented in Congress for many years as a Democrat.

It is improbable that the pioneers of the State fully appreciated the significance of the English reformer's theory or experiment. They were doubtless much more interested in the slavery question, which in those days frequently overshadowed all others in their local politics. The Lincolns are reported to have held anti-slavery principles, and to have been in relation with certain ardent abolitionists who were then making this corner of the State the centre of their campaign. The South-West counties of Indiana lay too close to Illinois and Missouri not to share in the struggle which went on in these States at the time of their admission to the Union. And although Indiana herself had entered as a free State, she had, in this district especially, been largely peopled by Kentuckians from over the river, who brought with them and still retained among them a certain number of slaves. The discussion of slavery and emancipation seems early to have attracted Abraham, whom tradition represents as

often "taking the stump" in the guise of an anti-slavery orator, amid the applause of his companions.

By this time, Clay, having himself been an unsuccessful candidate for the Presidency, had become Adams's Secretary of State, and was now more than ever regarded as the first man in his party. Although a Kentucky slave-holder, and deeply influenced by the social opinion of his State, he was generously opposed to the "special institution" of the South, and gave his great influence to an abortive scheme for the removal of the whole negro problem by the gradual emancipation of the coloured people and their colonization abroad. The pertinacity with which in later years Lincoln clung to this policy seems to indicate that he had been convinced of its justice in his youth.

But in the backwoods or elsewhere, no lad's life from 14 to 21 can be covered by such rough headings as "Politics," "Work," and "Schooling." Lincoln was fond of society, fond of play, fond of adventure; to each he gave himself with zest. He was at every marriage-feast, wrestling-bout, horse-race, and cock-fight. He was an admirable mimic, was already collecting a fund of anecdotes, and became a favourite member of the easy and somewhat loose society of Gentryville in the 'twenties. He was on every hand recognised as the best of companions, yet it seems certain that he himself was anything but loose, while we know that he positively disliked whisky, drinking but little, if any, and for many years none at all, and that he neither chewed tobacco nor indulged in the strange wild oaths cultivated on the frontier.

But nothing could be further from the truth than the conception of Lincoln as a clever, pious young

prig, making of himself a constant example to his dissolute companions. On the contrary, while always marked by an unconscious personal distinction, he regarded the common people, of whom he was one and among whom he always lived, with sincere admiration. "All his life," writes one of his friends,<sup>1</sup> "he held that whatsoever was popular—the habit or the sentiment of the masses—could not be essentially wrong." And we may add that a character like Lincoln's could hardly have developed in any but a sound and wholesome social environment.

Though he was so far from handsome, he was courteous, sympathetic, and a favourite with the village girls; and from what we know of his story, it is safe to surmise that his plain face and awkward figure concealed a very tender and susceptible heart. The combination was calculated to cause him no little mortification. He was perhaps enough of a poet to find at least some consolation in the pathetic verses that he loved to learn and even sometimes to indite.

But he comforted himself also by methods less exceptionable, visiting his bitter indignation on those who had injured him, in rough and effective satire. One at least of these performances<sup>2</sup> issued in a personal encounter not creditable to young Lincoln's good taste, though he came out of it the victor. It is not necessary to enter into its details, but they confirm the impression that he was as sensitive as other young men to social slights; while they prove that sometimes, when

<sup>1</sup> W. H. Lamon.

<sup>2</sup> That connected with the Grigsbys, perhaps the principal people of the village, one of whom married Abe's sister.

he was pressed too far, his usual self-control deserted him, and he became unscrupulous in his vengeance. He had thus good cause, in his own experience, to dread the entrance of passion into controversy ; for in his cooler moments he suffered the greatest humiliation in recalling his own violent words and actions. Throughout his life such reminiscences were peculiarly bitter to him.

The chief of his youthful adventures, of which we have any record, was his trading expedition to New Orleans at the age of nineteen. The voyage of more than a thousand miles down the broad winding rivers of the Ohio and Mississippi to that gay metropolis, so different in every respect from the little frontier settlements with which he was familiar, was one of the experiences of his life. And it was a daring enterprise, though not an uncommon one—probably his father had undertaken the journey more than once—for New Orleans was the principal market of all the Western States, and the river was the only turnpike road to it. None the less, it was not without its serious perils, made, as Lincoln and many another boatman made it, with a cargo of farm produce packed in barrels upon a flat-boat or raft of his own building. He had had, it would seem, some preparation for the venture, having acted for a time as ferry and jobbing boatman on the Ohio. Now he set forth as “bow-hand” with the son of his employer, and passing Cairo, came out upon the mysterious high-road of the West, “the Father of Waters,” as he loved in later years to call it, guiding his frail vessel among the snags and eddies of the ever-winding, widening current: past Memphis, under the bluffs of Vicks-

burg, and so by Baton Rouge—where he successfully defended his boat, attacked by negro robbers—to its destination. The fascination of those weeks remained with him, and quickened that keen and permanent interest which he always showed in matters relating to the river. He could never doubt that it united all the lands along its course into one, nor could he forget New Orleans the first great city he had seen. His success upon this voyage prompted him to repeat it more than once in later years. It was one of the mile-stones in his career, his first escape from the monotony and narrowness of the backwoods, his first taste of the wider life of men; and it was, besides, a public proof of his ability in an enterprise requiring cool judgment and self-reliance.

The spirit of change was entering into the little household on Pigeon Creek. John Hanks, the abler of the two cousins, and an upright, serious man, had pushed out West again, settling almost in the centre of Illinois, at that time but sparsely peopled. He found the conditions there so much more promising than around Gentryville, that, in the spring of 1830, the Lincolns abandoned their unprofitable farm to follow him. They had at least given the locality a fair trial, and if, after fourteen years, they left it for a better, they can hardly be accused of mere vagabondage.

Death had again broken into the family circle. Apparently before Abe set out for New Orleans, his only sister—a plain, amiable, serious woman, who in many respects resembled him—had died in child-birth after little more than a year of married life. Malarial fevers again and again devastated the community, and



carried off the very cattle. It was no wonder that now, when Abraham was coming into the full strength of his manhood and Mrs Lincoln's own children were fully grown, her two daughters being married, they should decide to set out for what must have seemed to them like a promised land. The very name of the Sangamon district, which they had chosen for their new home, signified "the land where there is plenty to eat."

There is no doubt that Lincoln was attached to Pigeon Creek, with its pathetic associations, and to Gentryville and the people among whom he had grown up. But he was now increasingly conscious of a power within him, perhaps of a destiny before him, incompatible with the circumstances either of a "Southern Scrub" or of a poor farmer in the backwoods of Indiana. The time had come for a change of scene, and just before he entered upon his majority he threw in his lot quite definitely with the enterprising democratic North, and turned his back upon the regions where he and his father had been born, the realm of the Southern aristocrat and his "institution." Sangamon County, Illinois, was to become his home for the next thirty years.

The journey thither was made by the whole party, now numbering thirteen—for Thomas Lincoln seems to have been a sort of leader among his kindred—with all their worldly belongings, in a single roomy waggon behind two yoke of oxen, Abe driving. On their leisurely way—the journey of some 200 miles occupied a fortnight—he contrived to turn many an honest penny as "a peddler of smallwares and notions."

There is an anecdote of this Lincoln exodus which deserves repetition. A little dog belonging to one of the party strayed behind, and when the waggon had forded a difficult ice-covered stream began to yelp in pitiful helplessness on the further shore. The long-legged, kind-hearted Abe waded back for it through the freezing water. In recalling the incident, he said, "His frantic leaps of joy and other evidences of a dog's gratitude amply repaid me for all the exposure I had undergone."

At length the Lincolns came to John Hanks's at Decatur, and were brought by him to their own plot of land a few miles further west.

Abe went to work heartily to ensure that his parents might start well in their new home. He helped to build the cabin, and to clear, fence, and plough some ten acres before he left them. But he felt that now the time had come when he must strike out a line of his own. He was turned twenty-one, he had long been restless at home, and doubtless saw clearly that he could be of more value to himself, to the world, and to his own family besides, as an independent man.

So in the summer of 1830, Lincoln began his career in the only way immediately open to him, by splitting fence-rails for a pair of jean trousers. It was a sound beginning, and, besides, thoroughly characteristic of a story in which the hero waited upon opportunity, and was many a time to acknowledge that his success had depended upon his willingness to be guided by the humblest necessities of the hour. His capital at the outset consisted of his axe, his shrewdness, his muscular strength



and his attractive personality. Beyond these, he owned nothing, save humour, indomitable purpose, and the self-reliance of a true pioneer. But nothing more than these seems to have been necessary for success.

## Chapter II

# Ventures

Illinois in 1830—Lincoln at New Salem—First Election Address—The Black Hawk War—Misfortunes—Becomes a Surveyor—Enters the Legislature—Romance—The Long Nine—Becomes a Lawyer—First Protest against Slavery.

IN 1830, Illinois was a new country, and here, as fifty years earlier in Kentucky, the Lincolns were to be counted among the pioneers. They could not then foresee that theirs was to become one of the three most populous States in the Union, rivalling New York and Pennsylvania in importance, and destined by its central geographical position to stand as a keystone in the arch of popular liberty. When Thomas Lincoln and his family crossed the Wabash at Vincennes — an old French settlement with memories of the daring march of Clarke in 1782 — Chicago was a name as yet unspoken, and prairies, still scoured by the Indians, covered the northern part of the State in one wide reach of otherwise unbroken solitude. Southern Illinois, with its heavy timber, was, however, already becoming populous, and settlements were springing up through all the fertile Sangamon region.

Like the Lincolns, the people were drawn principally from the South. They came, not from among the wealthy slave-owners — who passed on across the





MAP OF ILLINOIS, INDIANA  
AND PART OF KENTUCKY

Bartholomew, Edin'

river into the slave State of Missouri—but rather from that lower social class to which, as we have noted, the economy of the Southern States offered neither hope nor encouragement. A simple, sociable, contented people, among whom a man of parts might readily rise to usefulness and leadership.

The principal worthy of those days was Governor Ninian Edwards, a man of fair talents and ponderous rhetoric, whose imposing and princely person was decorated with ruffles and gold buttons. He had grown up in Kentucky, of which State he had early been made Attorney-General. Thence he migrated to Illinois in 1809, and was its first territorial governor. At a later date he represented it in the United States Senate. When Illinois passed from the condition of a Territory to that of a State, Edwards was again elected Governor. His political influence, due in the first place to his ability, was doubtless increased among the Illinoisians of those days by his aristocratic presence, his broadcloth, and “the fine carriage driven by a negro,” in which he and his family took the air.

By 1830, however, a change was entering into local politics: they had been swept by the political revolution which is associated with the name of President Jackson. Every national, as well as every local issue, came to be regarded as wholly secondary to the despotic will and prejudice of that extraordinary man, and his unscrupulous “Kitchen Cabinet.” The Governor chosen in 1830 was typical of the new order of politicians, an order inferior in many respects to that represented by Ninian Edwards. He is known to fame as a “thorough-going original Jackson

man"; and he is said to have won his high office armed with a Bible in one pocket and a whisky bottle in the other.

It is little wonder that all the more sober and thoughtful people of America gradually gathered into a national party of opposition, which found its principal leader in Henry Clay, and which adopted the title of "Whigs," in contrast to that of "Democrats" retained by the party of the Administration. At first one of the "nominal" as distinguished from the "whole-hog" Jackson-men, young Lincoln early indentified himself with the Whigs.

But his first enterprise after the historic winter of 1830-1—"the winter of the deep snow," when nearly all the wolves and game of the district were destroyed by the famished settlers—was a second flat-boat expedition to New Orleans. This time, Lincoln spent a month in the then rapidly increasing city, among the wild and reckless river boatmen. And here he saw that worst and ugliest of Southern institutions, the slave-market. Perhaps he had visited it already on his earlier expedition, but on this occasion all the horror of its sinister meaning seized him. And the sight of a mulatto girl at auction there, so stirred him to fierce indignation that he exclaimed to his companions, "if ever I get a chance to hit that *thing*" (meaning slavery) "I'll hit it hard." "It run its iron into him then and there, May, 1831: I have heard him say so often," quoth his cousin, John Hanks.

Returning by steamboat up the river to St Louis, then the principal city of the New West, he tramped thence to the new farm his father was clearing in the eastern part of the State, a foot-journey over-land of more

than a hundred miles. In July, he made his way down the Sangamon River to the little log-village of New Salem, where he was presently installed as manager of a new store and of a grist-mill. These were the property of the adventurer who, in the spring, had entrusted his goods to Lincoln for the river voyage. Abe had already, on his passage to New Orleans, made a favourable first appearance in the village. On that occasion his flat-boat had grounded upon the New Salem mill-dam, and had been successfully released from its precarious position after twenty-four hours of anxiety, by some simple but daringly ingenious mechanical expedient which had duly impressed the crowd of onlookers and advisers with the resourcefulness of the gigantic young stranger.

But it was by means of his unparalleled and inexhaustible capacity for story-telling, the art *par excellence* of the frontiersman, that he now won his way straight to their hearts. Wherever men gathered in New Salem, Lincoln's droll and pointed "Indian yarns" began to be in demand; and from the outset, he had leisure enough for the spinning of them. He arrived before his employer's merchandise, and in the interval, accepted every opportunity for work, but especially for talking, that occurred. The first that offered was that of serving as assistant at the polling booth. Asked for his qualifications, he genially responded that he could make "a few rabbit tracks" with his pen. In the absence of competitors, such qualification was sufficient, and thus Abraham Lincoln entered by the most modest doorway into the political life of his new State. The voters were but few, and for that reason the opportunity for "yarning" was great.



The second office he filled during these off-days was that of pilot on the river ; and this he held again and with great *éclat*, in the succeeding spring, when he brought the first, and probably the only, steamer that ever ascended the shallow winding stream, up beyond New Salem to Springfield. By this time he had thoroughly established himself in the confidence and good-will of the little community. As to his employer, that chattering worthy's enthusiasm for his clerk and manager had long passed the bounds of discretion, and his noisy adulation brought about a trial of prowess which might easily have cost Lincoln dear.

Among frontiersmen, the wrestling ground provided the infallible standard of worth, and was in constant requisition. In New Salem, wrestlings, which too often deteriorated into savage personal encounters, were the order of the day. The district was dominated by a gang of young hooligans of "the half-horse, half-alligator" type, known as the "Clary's Grove Boys." These fellows always resented the advent of a stranger, and they could hardly be expected to endure the noise of Lincoln's praises. So it came about that he had early to prove his worth, by physical demonstration, upon their ox-like champion.<sup>1</sup> It was a tough and doubtful combat, and owing to an attempt at foul-play, Lincoln himself became thoroughly roused and dangerous. He had the terrible temper of his father, though very few people ever had the misfortune to encounter it.

<sup>1</sup> The encounter was repugnant to Lincoln's feelings : "I never tussle and scuffle," he is reported as saying, "I don't like this wooling and pulling."



Upon this occasion, Jack Armstrong had ; and it is clear that he richly deserved whatever punishment he received. And this, he and his fellows, after the first moment of resentment and wrath, were eager to acknowledge ; so the bout ended well. The worsted champion and his good-natured bullies acclaimed themselves the warmest supporters of the valiant newcomer, and remained loyal to him, and he to them, to the story's end.

The incident illustrates Lincoln's way with his foes. He began with no desire for a quarrel, and however hot he might become in its pursuance, however "mad" he might be for the moment, when once it was settled, he was all generosity and good-nature as before. It was rare indeed for him to retain the slightest trace of vindictiveness. Henceforward, having defeated the Clary's Grove champion, he became the undisputed peacemaker of the region, and his services were in constant demand.<sup>1</sup>

The praises of Mr Offutt his employer, and of "the boys," were endorsed by the more sober people of New Salem, his customers. Lincoln was courteous, and scrupulously, even quixotically, honest. Able to defend his own rights, he showed himself far more anxious not to trespass on those of others, walking many miles to refund threepence overpaid by one customer, or to deliver a few ounces of tea, of which he found he had unwittingly defrauded another.

<sup>1</sup> Lincoln's physical strength has passed already into the region of legend : he could "pick up and carry away a chicken-house weighing six hundred pounds," "could sink an axe deeper into wood than any man I ever saw" ; could lift a hogshead of whisky and drink from the bung. Even as President he displayed curious feats of muscular power.

Yet, as I have noted before, he was no prig. People were puzzled by his rare combination of qualities usually separated. With all his social gifts and love of loafing and of entertaining loafers, he was, as we have seen strictly temperate, and even became an advocate of the "Washingtonian" Cause of total abstinence. While his stories often appealed to the humour of his male companions, and were sometimes as broad as they were pointed, his personal relations, especially with women, were marked by a quite uncommon fineness and chivalry of feeling. And similarly, though he was probably the most indifferent among the New Salem youth in matters of dress and appearance, he was the most punctilious in all affairs of conscience. He was never indifferent in these.

During his year at Offutt's store and mill, he was far from neglecting the books he loved so well. Already, as a youth in Indiana, he had been in the habit of attending trials at the nearest Court house, though that was many miles away ; and had delighted to watch the lawyers, the most distinguished among the local personages, when they met in wordy combat. Forthwith he had borrowed the "Statutes of Indiana" from the Gentryville constable and mastered not only their 375 pages, but the more important documents which introduced them—the famous Declaration of Independence and of the rights of man, the Constitution of the United States, and the Ordinance of 1787 which excluded slavery forever from the territory of the North-West and consequently both from Indiana and Illinois.

It was toward the Law that his own ambition was

directed ; but he was nothing if not thorough, and he was conscious enough that as yet he had little foundation of knowledge to build upon. So now at New Salem, by the advice and with the aid of his friend the school-master, he worked at mathematics, always a congenial subject, and mastered Kirkham's grammar, borrowing illumination from the embers in the cooper's shop.

Offutt was much impressed by all this well-directed energy and began to boast his clerk would become President of the United States. The notion was by no means new to the young man, and, as though by way of securing the first step towards that giddy altitude, Lincoln, at the age of 22, announced himself as candidate for the Illinois State Legislature, counting on the good-will of his friends and his own great local popularity to win a seat. But his aspiration proved to be premature. His following, though enthusiastic, was too small to secure him the coveted prize.

The attempt was, however, sufficient to indicate clearly the ultimate goal of his ambition, which was that of the lawyer-politician. In face of the predominating Democratic complexion of the State, his election address, issued in March 1832, proclaimed him a Whig "in favour of the Internal Improvement System" and of a "high protective tariff" intended to supply the funds for such Improvement. The special Improvement to which he devoted the major part of his address, was that of the Sangamon River, a matter of the liveliest local interest, and upon which he was already, as pilot, mill-manager and flat-boatman, a recognised authority. It seemed to him to be the most practicable means of connecting New

Salem with the Mississippi and its steamers. Addressing himself to other issues, he continued :

“ Upon the subject of education, not presuming to dictate any plan or system respecting it, I can only say that I view it as the most important subject which we, as a people, can be engaged in. That every man may receive at least a moderate education, and thereby be enabled to read the histories of his own and other countries, by which he may duly appreciate the value of our free institutions, appears to be an object of vital importance, even on this account alone, to say nothing of the advantages and satisfaction to be derived from all being able to read the Scriptures and other works, both of a religious and moral nature, for themselves.

“ For my part I desire to see the time when education—and by its means morality, sobriety, enterprise, and industry—shall become much more general than at present ; and should be gratified to have it in my power to contribute something to the advancement of any measure which might have a tendency to accelerate that happy period.

“ With regard to existing laws, some alterations are thought to be necessary. Many respectable men have suggested that our estray laws, the law respecting the issuing of executions, the road law, and some others, are deficient in their present form, and require alterations. But considering the great probability that the framers of those laws were wiser than myself, I should prefer not meddling with them, unless they were first attacked by others ; in which case I should feel it both a privilege and a duty to take that stand which, in my view, might tend most to the advancement of justice.

“ But, fellow-citizens, I shall conclude. Considering

the great degree of modesty which should always attend youth, it is probable I have already been more presuming than becomes me. However, upon the subjects of which I have treated, I have spoken as I have thought. I may be wrong in regard to any or all of them ; but, holding it a sound maxim that it is better only sometimes to be right than at all times to be wrong, so soon as I discover my opinions to be erroneous I shall be ready to renounce them.

“Every man is said to have his peculiar ambition. Whether it be true or not, I can say, for one, that I have no other so great as that of being truly esteemed of my fellow-men, by rendering myself worthy of their esteem. How far I shall succeed in gratifying this ambition is yet to be developed. I am young and unknown to many of you. I was born, and have ever remained, in the most humble walks of life. I have no wealthy or popular relations or friends to recommend me. My case is thrown exclusively upon the independent voters of the country, and if elected, they will have conferred a favour upon me for which I shall be unremitting in my labours to compensate. But if the good people in their wisdom shall see fit to keep me in the background, I have been too familiar with disappointments to be very much chagrined.—Your friend and fellow-citizen, A. LINCOLN.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> One other passage in the address is worth quoting, since it succinctly states the young lawyer's tendency at this time to “loose construction” in legal matters. He is in favour of a law to fix the limits of usury. “In cases of extreme necessity,” he says quaintly, “there could always be means found to cheat the law ; while in all other cases it would have its intended effect. I would favour the passage of a law on this subject which might not be very easily evaded. Let it be such that the labour and difficulty of evading it could only be justified in cases of greatest necessity.”

But with the publication of this address there came other changes in his story. Offutt's store failed, and its manager volunteered for the Black Hawk War.

The northern part of Illinois had suffered recently from disturbances due to the continual incursions of white settlers into the Indian reserves. In 1831, Black Hawk, an old and patriotic chief and the head of his nation now for forty years, had repudiated as fictitious certain treaties of long standing, and had crossed the Mississippi. He began to drive off the settlers and to re-establish his tribe upon their ancient territory, concisely declaring that "land cannot be sold." The settlers, however, would not admit this axiom of political philosophy, and the Indians were promptly expelled, Black Hawk being forced to sign a treaty which once more bound him to remain on the Western side of the great river. The promise, which was made unwillingly, was broken at the first opportunity ; and now, in the spring of 1832, with his band of five hundred braves, he again invaded northern Illinois. He was the more confident of regaining the land of his fathers since he had received promises of support from other tribes.

The Governor of the State at once issued a call for volunteers ; and Lincoln with many of his companions promptly repaired to the meeting-place assigned, some forty miles from New Salem. He was not without an elementary knowledge of military drill, for at that period the laws of the State required all able-bodied men to share in the half-yearly musters, under penalty of a small fine which was rarely incurred by the impecunious, holiday-loving frontiersmen. At the last of these musters, Lincoln would seem to have been chosen



a captain. He was as much surprised as he was delighted when, on this more august occasion, the Sangamon company again elected him to the post. His own comparative ignorance, and the scorn for any sort of military discipline entertained by those rough, rollicking young fellows out on a picnic, caused him considerable trouble and some temporary official disgrace in the course of the northward march. But these were more than recompensed by his intense enjoyment of the whole expedition, and his real security in the goodwill and respect of his companions.

The only incident of the campaign in which he need now figure is wholly to his credit. An unarmed Indian, carrying a safe-conduct from General Cass, took refuge in the camp. But the mere sight of a red man was too much for the young whites. The feud between the two races seemed to run subconsciously in their very blood and woke beyond control at the least incentive. It was about as much as Lincoln's life was worth to interpose his body between the muskets of the volunteers and their cowering guest; but he had come out to see what he conceived to be justice done, whether to white men or to Indians, and he was as ready to die for the cause under the one aspect as under the other. His courage and popularity, together with the moral strength of his position, carried him through the ugly moment, and the old Indian was saved. It is only one of many examples of the stern stuff that lay behind the man's amiability. He might be ambitious, but there was no unpopularity, no sacrifice he would not, and did not, dare for the thing he cherished most of all, his own inexorable sense of justice.



The war itself was not without more serious incidents and ended in July in a slaughter of Indians. Old Black Hawk was captured and carried for exhibition through the Eastern cities. Lincoln never came into the actual fighting, though once, on a mid-summer morning, his company entered a camp of scouts at sunrise, only to find it had been surprised during the night and its five occupants slain and scalped. "It was frightful," he said, in recalling the sight, "but it was grotesque; and the red sunlight seemed to paint everything all over." "I remember that one man had buckskin breeches on," he added, with his grotesque touch of realism.

The volunteers had been mustered out of service about the end of May, but Captain Lincoln enlisted as a private in a favoured company of Independent Rangers; and again, a month later, was mustered into another, under Major Robert Anderson, afterwards to be famous as the defender of Fort Sumter. Among the many distinguished officers with whom the young private became, in some degree, acquainted during this summer campaign, were Zachary Taylor, afterwards President, and Winfield Scott, destined to be Lincoln's military adviser during the first months of his administration; while, at the end of the expedition, Jefferson Davis appears to have escorted the old Indian down the river into captivity. Among his companions there were other figures interesting from their historic association; such were the sons of Boone, the Kentucky pioneer, and of Hamilton, youngest and most brilliant of the statesmen whose labours had issued in the American Constitution.

The Black Hawk War took Lincoln far away from

New Salem, and when his company was finally disbanded in the present State of Wisconsin, his horse being stolen, he had two hundred miles to cover on foot and by canoe, before taking up his canvass at the beginning of August. There can be no question of the energy, both physical and mental, displayed by Lincoln and his supporters during the few days remaining to them before the poll. But everywhere the country was being swept by the Jacksonian party, and on this occasion, as we have seen, Lincoln was not among the four successful candidates; indeed, he only ranked third among the eight who were defeated. His programme and his candidature were, however, popular at New Salem itself, and he had the satisfaction of receiving by far the largest poll in his own precinct; and, what was more valuable, he won the interest and subsequent esteem of some of his ablest fellow-citizens in the neighbouring settlements; among them, of one of his companions in the Black Hawk War, Major John Stuart, a lawyer with whom he afterwards entered into partnership.

Lincoln was now not only a defeated candidate, he was also, for a few weeks, among the unemployed. Then, unfortunately, a speculative opportunity offered itself, and with a promissory note he bought a partnership in one of the New Salem general stores. Though the new firm of Berry & Lincoln proceeded to buy out its two competitors with the same currency, and is said to have subsequently acquired a tavern licence for the retailing of whisky, it was foredoomed to failure.<sup>1</sup> Berry was, by all accounts, a reckless

<sup>1</sup> The whole incident of this partnership is somewhat obscure. In a reply to insinuations by Douglas made in 1858, Lincoln said: "Lincoln

gambler and a drunkard, and Lincoln had an appetite as insatiable as his partner's, and almost as little likely to further his present business—the appetite for books, for books of general literature, history, and poetry, but especially—*mirabile dictu*—for books of law.

By chance he had for half a dollar bought a *Blackstone* in a barrel of rubbish, and through the long idle summer days of 1833 he lay out under a great oak tree devouring it. "Never in my whole life," he once said, "was my mind so thoroughly absorbed." Under the influence of a whimsical idler, one Jack Kelso, he began to study Shakespeare, to read the poetry of Burns, and to discuss Deism. It was about this time, too, that he read Gibbon, and the less reliable history of Rollin. For all this reading, his power of concentration stood him in good stead. He always carried his book with him, and turned to it in the intervals of other occupations. Mrs Stowe has presented us with a portrait of him lying on a trundle-bed, with one long leg extended to rock the cradle of his hostess's infant, while he himself was absorbed in grammar.

Furthermore, he had now become the village post-master, and one of the perquisites of his office was the right to open and read the newspapers. The post only came in once a week, or sometimes once a fortnight, and as postal rates were high, the New Salem mail-bags were not heavy. But the distribution of their contents required long tramps, and offered, besides, endless opportunities for sociability, discussion, and gossip.

never kept a grocery anywhere in the world. It is true that Lincoln did work, the latter part of one winter, in a little still-house, up at the head of a hollow."

If it be true, as some declare, that Berry & Lincoln's grocery had been wholly converted into a liquor store by the winter of 1833-4, it is probable that the junior partner had ceased to feel any personal interest in its success, and it is certain that he was now seeking to support himself by any other form of labour which offered. It is therefore so much more to his honour, and—if that were needed—a final proof of its exactitude, that when at last the enterprise actually failed and the partnership was dissolved by the death of Berry, Lincoln, instead of attempting to escape from their debt of over £200 by making a composition with his creditors, heroically agreed to hand over to them all his surplus earnings till the amount should be paid in full. How serious was this self-imposed handicap on his worldly progress may be gathered from the fact that he was still carrying his burden in his fortieth year. He did not even attempt, at the moment, to make a new start elsewhere, but bravely continued to live and work among those to whom he was in debt.

Before the final catastrophe, Lincoln had added a further profession to those of store and tavern-keeper and village postmaster. The three principal employments for young Illinoisians of talent were Land-surveying, the Law, and Politics. Lincoln had hopes of entering ultimately upon both the second and third, but found that for the present the first required less training and was more readily available. The District Surveyor, a certain John Calhoun (an able politician, but not to be confused with the great Southern leader of the same name), at this time heavily overburdened with the immense task of settling the limits of the

thousands of new farms being claimed and cleared in the Sangamon region, and hearing of Lincoln as a young man of promise and capacity, offered to make him one of his deputies. Such appointments usually went by party favour, and Calhoun was a Democrat. Before accepting the post, Lincoln therefore bargained for absolute political freedom of speech and action. This he obtained, and forthwith, working with intense concentration day and night, made himself master of the elements of his new profession. He was practising it by the beginning of 1834, and during the next three years surveying continued to be his principal source of livelihood.

As it often carried him far afield, he had to purchase a cheap horse out of his first earnings, and had much ado to pay for it. What was more serious, both his horse and his instruments were seized and sold, on the claim of one of his creditors, for a part of the Berry & Lincoln debt. But a neighbour bought them in, and saved the now penniless fellow from a serious disaster. Indeed, if it had not been for the almost universal esteem and good-will of New Salem, from the Clary's Grove boys to the schoolmaster and minister, but especially of the women of their households, those days would have been far blacker than they were. Even had he chosen to ask for it, he could have counted on no help from his father who was making the barest of livings from his new farm. But Lincoln himself was so universally helpful, and carried with him besides such evident promise of success, that there was a welcome for him wherever he went. The poorest always had a place for him at their table and the most prosperous regarded him as one of



themselves. He could hardly be homeless so long as every cabin and farmstead in and about New Salem was open to him.

The surveying suited him admirably, and if it had been a continuous employment, might have brought comparative wealth, as he could earn 12s. 6d. a day when at work, with extra for maps. Moreover, it took him into new districts, continually increasing his local knowledge, and widening the circle of his friends and acquaintances. Hence, with the return of the biennial elections to the State Assembly, he felt his prospects of success as a candidate had considerably improved and flung himself, for a second time, heart and soul into the canvass.

The political situation also, was more favourable to him than on the previous occasion. During the national crisis of 1832-3, when South Carolina had threatened to dissolve the Union at a blow, and had only been dissuaded by the determined attitude of President Jackson and the eloquence of Henry Clay, the popularity of the old Democratic General had been unbounded. But now his despotic behaviour and outrageous partizanship in the most serious public matters, was causing a short-lived re-action. The elements of opposition, protesting against what they were pleased to style his monarchical assumptions, gathered, under the title of "Whigs" and the leadership of Clay, to dispute each new and arbitrary extension of the President's executive power, and to stem, if that were possible, the torrent of lawlessness and corruption whose very spring and source seemed to be situated in the White House.

Lincoln, as we have seen, was now a Whig. But

while he was frank in the statement of his political views, he knew that they were not the sole deciding element in an election. He never hesitated to urge his claim or to show his personal capacity to any group of electors he might meet. He was ready to establish his ability according to their standards, in mowing and harvesting, in a trial of strength, or in a wordy dispute as the case might be. And his extraordinary power of exposition and explanation stood him in good stead. As a mere child he could never bear to be misunderstood, and had always been angered by people who could not or would not explain to him what they meant. All through his youth at Gentryville he was practising the art of explanation. His knowledge, too, was thoroughly assimilated and always available. Even more valuable was his complete and instinctive understanding of his audience, which enabled him to appeal directly to its sympathies. But best of all was the out-going good-will and unassuming generosity and thoughtfulness, issuing in spontaneous deeds of graceful self-denial, which made him beloved even by strangers. As Herndon says, "His strength, kindness of manner, love of fairness and justice, his original and unique sayings, his power of mimicry, his perseverance—all made a combination rarely met with on the frontier."

His success in the campaign of 1834 was sufficiently notable. He doubled his vote of 1832 and stood second among the four successful candidates, his friend Major Stuart being the last. He was still very poor at the time of his election, and had to borrow £40 from a well-wisher in order, as he said, "to make a decent appearance." As a member of the General



Assembly of his State, Lincoln would receive, while attending its sessions at Vandalia Court House, the same payment as was awarded to the Deputy Surveyor, and this, with his other earnings should have provided him with a sufficient competence had not all, beyond the narrowest necessity, been absorbed in the repayment of the Berry & Lincoln debt.

The most important result of his election was the new range of companionship into which it brought him. In the lower house of the Illinois Assembly he had intercourse with the ablest men of the state. He might still retain, as he always did, something of the manners and appearance of a country bumpkin, offering an easy target to polished wits; but, though he was not insensitive to ridicule, he survived it, and to the ablest of his fellow-legislators, gradually proved his worth.

The Assembly represented a population of a quarter of a million, and was a little parliament of some eighty members; about two thirds of their number forming the lower house. They were nearly all of Southern birth or origin, many among them being Kentuckians like Lincoln. Prejudice against men from the eastern States was very strong in Illinois; there could be nothing more detestable to these plain, open-handed farmers and southern lawyers than the sharp practices and intellectual arrogance with which the "cute" Yankee was accredited. This feeling, so common at that time throughout the West, was destined soon to pass away.

Among the young lawyers whom Lincoln met at Vandalia was one from the East who was afterwards

as closely identified with the State of his adoption as was Lincoln himself. Stephen Douglas of Vermont, was four years his junior, a man of short stature, quick intuition and ready speech, his opposite in almost every quality both physical and moral, but of equal ability, and well fitted to be his rival for political honours. He had just been called to the Bar, while Lincoln had been diligently reading law through the autumn, and beginning to use such elements as he had acquired in the service of his neighbours.

At the end of November he found his way to the village of Vandalia, then the State capital, some seventy-five miles to the south of New Salem, which he seems already to have visited as delegate to a conference for promoting the establishment of Elementary Schools, a matter in which he was warmly interested. Here he remained during the winter of 1834-5, serving his apprenticeship in the business of a young and rapidly growing State. He was a faithful member of a financial committee, a position in which however conscientious he might be, he could never have displayed his parts. And he spent much of his time in the State Library, reading law and improving his casual acquaintance with general literature.

Lincoln was 26 when he returned to New Salem in the spring of 1835. From an unknown penniless adventurer, he had, in less than five years, become the public character of the village. His rise was not, indeed, a meteoric one—his movements were never spectacular; almost imperceptibly he won his way, and every new position was captured by patient spade-work and sure strategy. This was the natural method of his slow, prudent, determined temper, a

method which, in its unfailing results, so much resembled that of Fate that, to the more far-sighted of his companions, he seemed already to be a man of destiny.

And now once again there entered into his life that element of tragedy which played so large a part in it, relating his personality with an exquisite intimacy to the hearts of all who suffer. He had been boarding at the tavern of James Rutledge, a South Carolinian, and the pioneer descendant of one of the more distinguished families of that State. And there he fell in love with Ann, the daughter of the house.

She was four years his junior, born like him in Kentucky, and fair as a flower of the forest. At seventeen she had been betrothed to a prosperous young fellow from New York. In 1834, however, he had left New Salem, and the pain of his absence had become accentuated by silence, mystery, rumour, and growing distrust. The girl had loved him and she clung to him still with pathetic tenacity. If Lincoln had not already loved Ann hopelessly enough for her own sake, his chivalrous heart could hardly have resisted the appeal of this tragic situation. As the village postmaster, he observed that the expected letters came no longer from the absent lover ; and as a friend and inmate of the household, he could not be indifferent to the girl's suffering. To be a useless witness of such pain was almost the only thing that Lincoln could never bear. And his natural desire to help and solace his companion was in this case rendered yet more keen by a profound and passionate sympathy.

Ann seems to have been a beautiful girl, with

auburn or golden hair, and a sweet clear voice ; one pictures her as possessed of the indefinable charm of an old and cultured Southern family, with fine intuitive sympathy and intelligence. Lincoln was very much in love with her, and it is said that he even attended "quilting-bees" to sit at her side while she worked. She would sing for him, too : and the fact that his life-long predilection for some melancholy verses beginning "Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud ?" dates from this period, suggests the possibility that he first learnt them from her lips.<sup>1</sup>

Little is known about the circumstances of their engagement, which took place in the spring of 1835, and ended tragically in the girl's death, apparently from typhoid, in the following August. Little is known, but tradition declares that she could not endure the conflict in her heart of the old love with the new. In her delirium she cried out for Lincoln, and when she died heart-broken, the melancholy which lay sealed

<sup>1</sup> The first verse runs as follows :

" Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud ?  
Like a swift-fleeting meteor, a fast-flying cloud,  
A flash of the lightning, a break of the wave,  
He passeth from life to his rest in the grave."

The poem goes on to expatiate on the equalisation of all ranks in the democracy of death ; and tells how each generation repeats the same tale :

" They died—ay, they died !—we things that are now,  
That walk on the turf that lies over their brow,  
And make in their dwellings a transient abode,  
Meet the things that they met on their pilgrimage road."

The poem is of the most melancholy, and serves well to recall with what a strain of sadness Lincoln's jokes were interwoven. His avowed predilection for lines of this quality goes far to prove him what he truly was, a natural and unconscious, not an artificial, humorist.

up behind his eyes broke over him in waves of unbearable agony.

It was a terrible autumn and winter for the desolate man. His heart, he said, was buried with the dead girl in the lonely little graveyard seven miles away. No one has measured the depth of the darkness in which he was isolated during those months. Those about him thought that despair had led him beyond the borderlands of sanity into Chaos and the Unknown, and he himself seems to have agreed with them. Dread, as of the fevered gloom of malarial forests—nightmare blackness of constitutional and inherited melancholy—despair of a passionate nature—into these abysses he was plunged, and by these was separated from his companions.

The village "squire" and his good wife took him away to their cabin under the hill beyond New Salem; and there he gradually regained the poise and balance he had lost. But the hand of love had cut the name of Ann Rutledge deep into his heart with death's sharp knife, and life never effaced that sacred scar.<sup>1</sup>

And since he was at this time under the influence of such writers as Paine, Volney and Voltaire, we can understand how the emotional tragedy of her death must have been heightened by his own mental attitude. His child's-faith was destroyed; the securer faith of maturity was not yet his. For a time he lost that sense of purpose and meaning by which he lived.

But life was strong in him; its duties and interests sustained him. He returned to Vandalia for several weeks in the winter of 1835-6, the Legislature having

<sup>1</sup> A quarter of a century later he said to a friend "I did honestly and truly love the girl, and think often, often of her now."

been summoned for an extra session. The constant and rapid influx of settlers had produced an abnormal growth in population, and the time had come for an increase in and re-appointment of representatives. For this reason fifty new members were to be added to the Assembly at the elections of the following autumn.

Illinois was dazzled by the rapidity of her own growth. She foresaw for herself an immediate future of unprecedented prosperity, and hastily began her preparations. The policy of internal improvement, the clearing of rivers, the cutting of canals, the building of railroads, or at least the planning and preparation for these things, became the one subject of entrancing political interest. The legislators met in an atmosphere of optimism and even of romance; they were young men dreaming dreams. And their visions were recorded in legislative enactments that provided, during these few weeks, for sixteen railroads and ten new schools.

The session being over, Lincoln returned to New Salem, and was busy during the spring both with his work as surveyor and upon his law books. In May, he ceased to be postmaster, the Post Office being removed to the rival village of Petersburg; and in June, he was again a candidate for the Legislature. Those were the last days before party platforms and conventions. Candidates were still self-nominated and declared their own views. Lincoln's were briefly stated as follows:

"I go for all sharing the privileges of the government who assist in bearing its burdens. Consequently I go for admitting all whites to the right of suffrage who pay taxes or bear arms (by no means excluding



females). If elected, I shall consider the whole people of Sangamon my constituents, as well those that oppose as those that support me. While acting as their representative, I shall be governed by their will on all subjects upon which I have the means of knowing what their will is: and upon all others I shall do what my own judgment teaches me will best advance their interests. Whether elected or not, I go for distributing the proceeds of the sales of public lands<sup>1</sup> to the several States, to enable our State, in common with others, to dig canals and construct railroads without borrowing money and paying the interest on it. If alive on the first Monday in November, I shall vote for Hugh L. White for President."

The opposition to Jackson had hardly crystallised into a national party in 1836, when four hostile candidates appeared in the field against Van Buren, the Democratic nominee. White of Tennessee received the support of a number of dissatisfied Southern Democrats, who, after his defeat, joined the Whig party. It has been well said<sup>2</sup> that the American Whigs represented a political "raft" loosely tied together; the timbers were never properly morticed into a sea-worthy craft. Though Whigism stood for a certain liberalism as opposed to the conservatism of

<sup>1</sup> This distribution of proceeds of public lands for internal improvements was part of the so-called "American system" of Clay, to which reference has already been made. Protective tariffs were also intended to produce funds for similar purposes. The whole policy of the Whigs was that of progressively developing the resources of the continent by means of Congressional (National) assistance. This policy gradually separated the interests of the West and South, and in time resulted in the league of the Progressive Northern manufacturer and Western farmer against the Conservative Southern planter.

<sup>2</sup> By A. Johnston in his *History of American Politics*.



the Democrats, and for a broad construction of the constitution in favour of the increase of Federal, as against State, power,—yet its weakness in any positive principles is shown in the mere availability of all its successful candidates.

The Presidential campaign in Sangamon county was fierce and strenuous. While the Whig rout throughout the country was to be complete, the local election for the Legislature resulted in a severe Democratic reverse. The Whigs carried the county, electing all their candidates—who from their exceptional stature became known at Vandalia as “the Long Nine.” Abraham Lincoln “the Longest of the Long Nine” stood at their head. He had swum in upon a tide of enthusiasm for internal improvements, and was already dreaming of a future governorship of his State. Illinois was imitating New York in the rapidity of its growth: he would be “the De Witt Clinton of Illinois.”

During the autumn he was licensed, and began to practise law; but at the same time, owing to the boom in land values consequent on the schemes for internal improvements, he was busier than ever with his surveying.<sup>1</sup> The desire too, for a settlement in life and for a home of his own, was again occupying his mind, and after his arrival in Vandalia for the winter’s session of the legislature he commenced to correspond with Mary Owens, a Kentucky girl who had occasionally stayed with her married sister near New Salem. She was a little older than Lincoln, a good-looking, high-spirited, attractive woman of means

<sup>1</sup> It is said that, again, at this election, £40 was subscribed for his expenses: of this sum he returned to his well-wishers an unexpended balance of £39, 17s.

and education. Her relations with the young statesman of New Salem, who was by this time in his twenty-eighth year, were singular, and were touched by that grotesqueness which belonged to the person of her lover—if lover indeed, we can call him. For in all probability he was still too distraught, still too nearly heart-broken by the death of Ann Rutledge, some fifteen months before, to be master of himself, or to understand what he really wanted from a woman. And from Miss Owens, "Friend Mary," as he called her—least, perhaps of all. He had once made a foolish pledge to her sister that he would marry this girl if she would but come again to New Salem ; and now, only half attracted by her, he fancied himself bound by his preposterous promise. The fact is surely evidence enough of an unhappy condition of mind, of over-conscientiousness and emotional strain. Fortunately for them both, Miss Owens seems not to have taken his attentions too seriously.

He was ill and miserable when he reached Vandalia, but threw himself into the work of the session, and especially into the task of removing the State Capital to Springfield, the more central county-seat of Sangamon. This he achieved by shrewd and patient manœuvres, to the delight of his constituents. Though endless and adroit bargaining was required in order to win the support of the representatives of other counties which were as eager for the prize of the Capital as was Sangamon, yet it would seem that Lincoln, who became a political expert, never allowed his Macchiavelian shrewdness to over-reach his political conscience. He was still "Honest old Abe." He could drive a hard bargain, but he would not

purchase a vote by what he regarded as a dishonest one. We can still hear him, after some protracted sitting, when the candles were burning low and every argument had been urged upon him by his friends, making his final declaration : " You will never get me to support a measure which I believe to be wrong, although by doing so I may accomplish that which I believe to be right." He was prepared to stand out absolutely alone, if need be, against the full tide and passion of political feeling.

This was notably illustrated by his protest against certain resolutions passed by the General Assembly in March 1837. In these the formation of Abolition Societies was denounced, and the right of property in slaves in the Southern States was declared to be sacred. Now Lincoln might easily have ignored the resolutions. He did not sympathise with the ways of Abolition Societies ; he did not believe that Congress had any power to interfere with slavery in the Southern States. The resolutions were conservatively worded, and he might, one would suppose, have let them pass without protest.

But though Lincoln heartily disapproved of the methods of the abolitionists as tending to embitter sectional feeling, and to perpetuate slavery in the South, yet, over and above all that, he hated slavery. So he made his protest. In phrases as careful as those of the original resolutions, he declared his belief " that the institution of slavery is founded on both injustice and bad policy, but that the promulgation of abolition doctrines tends rather to increase than abate its evils." Only one of all the 130 members of the Assembly supported him in that protest ; and

in the bitter state of feeling then prevailing on this subject in Illinois, which soon afterwards resulted in the killing of an abolitionist at Alton, his action was as brave as it was singular. Be it remembered to his credit that all his friends in the legislature were Kentuckians, among whom any avowal of anti-slavery opinion was apt to lead to social ostracism.

The main labour of those busy weeks in Vandalia consisted, however, in the continued planning and laying out of railroads, turnpikes, bridges and canals, for which a sum of two and a half millions sterling was voted upon account. In those hours of optimism when the national debt had been paid off, and a vast income was pouring into the Federal Treasury, leaving a surplus to be distributed among the States, and when European capitalists were eagerly investing their wealth in Transatlantic securities, it was confidently anticipated in Illinois that the State bonds would command a premium which in itself would suffice for the outlay upon public works.

Lincoln was never a financier; he was not the man to perceive the folly of the reckless expenditure which now commenced, and which during the next two years involved his State in so overwhelming a burden of debt. It was hardly checked even by the crash of May 10, when the New York banks suspended specie payment. America was, as it were, possessed by the wild demon of speculation in promissory notes and paper land-values; and the failure of his own enterprise at New Salem was not enough to supply that "money-sense" which seems from first to last to have been lacking in Lincoln.

The worthies of 1837 were perhaps only premature

in their plannings: for the modern railway map of Illinois shows most of their schemes fulfilled. They were true prophets, but they lacked the historical sense, the sense of perspective. Governor Reynolds, who had been attending Congress in Washington, found on his return that the people were "perfectly insane on the subject of improvements." Yet the demand for them was by no means insane, and might probably have been granted, though in less haste, had their practical advisers been men more experienced than were the pioneer politicians of Illinois in the hazards of such financial undertakings as those upon which they were so confidently launching their young State.

## Chapter III

### Settlements

Removal to Springfield—Stuart and Lincoln—Engagement to Mary Todd—Letters to Joshua Speed—The Shields Affair—Marriage—Temperance—Logan and Lincoln.

THE year of Queen Victoria's accession was, for quite other reasons, notable in Lincoln's life. It saw his removal to Springfield, with whose interests he had so actively identified himself, and therewith, the commencement of his legal career.

It would seem that his friend, Major Stuart, one of the most popular lawyers in the State, not content with lending him law-books, made him an offer of partnership;<sup>1</sup> and in mid-April Lincoln said farewell to New Salem, and rode into the new capital, with all his personal effects in a pair of saddlebags, upon a borrowed horse.

He was 28 years of age, and as poor as when, seven years before, he had entered New Salem. He made this second start in life with the old indomitable purpose, but with the added melancholy of a man who had known disaster and despair.

Characteristically enough, he began what was to be

<sup>1</sup> Lincoln was admitted to the bar, as a person of good character March 24, 1836; his name appears on the roll of attorneys, September 9, of the same year. (F. T. Hill.)



the most intimate friendship of his whole life in the first shop he entered. It was a large country store, and Lincoln had been inquiring what was the cost of a bed and bedding. Hearing the price, he said that he was making an experiment as a lawyer, and asked if he could have credit till Christmas; adding with despondency, "If I fail in this, I do not know that I can ever pay you." The storekeeper looked hard at this stranger who was even more honest than he was poor, and whose face seemed, for the moment, the saddest he had ever seen. He had a double bed in the big room above; and there and then he offered to share it. Lincoln's sadness vanished; he accepted eagerly, and they became close friends. "The best part of a man's life consists of his friendship," Lincoln used to say: Joshua Speed, the storekeeper, was the principal figure in the group of comrades which was to make his new life possible.<sup>1</sup>

But in spite of new friends, he missed the old friendly ways of New Salem. And, besides, he was worrying over another matter.

Early in May he wrote to Miss Owens that he was dull, lonely, and out of things. He would be glad of her society; but as for bringing her to share his lot—for he seems to have spoken tentatively to her of marriage—he warned her that if she came, she could only look on as an outsider, at the social display of this little metropolis. "There is a great deal of flourishing about in carriages here, which it would be

<sup>1</sup> Speed was five years Lincoln's junior, and at this time 23 years old. He was a Kentuckian, and came of a prosperous family of anti-slavery convictions. After completing his college course, he had settled in Springfield about 1835.



your doom to see without sharing. You would have to be poor without the means of hiding your poverty. Do you believe you could bear that patiently?" He wants to hear from her—a long letter "would be a good deal of company in this busy wilderness."

Three months later he wrote to her again as follows :

"FRIEND MARY,—You will no doubt think it rather strange that I should write you a letter on the same day on which we parted, and I can only account for it by supposing that seeing you lately makes me think of you more than usual ; while at our late meeting we had but few expressions of thoughts. You must know that I cannot see you or think of you with entire indifference ; and yet it may be that you are mistaken in regard to what my real feelings toward you are. If I knew you were not, I should not trouble you with this letter. Perhaps any other man would know enough without further information ; but I consider it my peculiar right to plead ignorance, and your bounden duty to allow the plea. I want in all cases to do right, and most particularly so in all cases with women. I want at this particular time, more than anything else, to do right with you ; and if I knew it would be doing right, as I rather suspect it would, to let you alone, I would do it. And for the purpose of making the matter as plain as possible, I now say that you can now drop the subject, dismiss your thoughts (if ever you had any) from me forever, and leave this letter unanswered, without calling forth one accusing murmur from me. And I will even go further, and say that if it will add anything to your comfort or peace of mind to do so, it is my sincere

wish that you should. Do not understand by this that I wish to cut your acquaintance. I mean no such thing. What I do wish is that our further acquaintance shall depend upon yourself. If such further acquaintance would contribute nothing to your happiness, I am sure it would not to mine. If you feel yourself in any degree bound to me, I am now willing to release you, provided you wish it; while, on the other hand, I am willing and even anxious to bind you faster, if I can be convinced that it will, in any considerable degree, add to your happiness. This, indeed, is the whole question with me. Nothing would make me more miserable than to believe you miserable—nothing more happy than to know you were so.

“In what I have now said, I think I cannot be misunderstood; and to make myself understood is the only object of this letter.

“If it suits you best not to answer this—farewell!—a long life and a merry one attend you! But if you conclude to write back, speak as plainly as I do. There can be neither harm nor danger in saying to me anything you think, just in the manner you think it.

“My respects to your sister. — Your friend,  
LINCOLN.”

His appeal for frankness seems to have resulted in a rebuff which he was slow to accept, till the lady—who, while she respected him and found him a good friend, felt him to be impossible as a husband—decisively settled the matter, and he was more chagrined than satisfied at regaining his freedom.

Perhaps she looked for a less impersonal attach-

ment than he had offered, and it is clear that she resented his indifference to the details both of life and love. The unpleasing vein of irony and the very ill-conceived humour in which Lincoln described this unfortunate affair to a friend, shows that it still gave him acute discomfort. But I think that his letter betrays disappointed hopes and ambitions, however natural, rather than disappointed love.

"I have now come to the conclusion" he said at the close of this singularly awkward epistle,<sup>1</sup> "never again to think of marrying, and for this reason, I can never be satisfied with any one who would be blockhead enough to have me." After this, it seems needless to add that he was engaged to be married to another woman within the year.

In the meantime, Lincoln and his partner were deep both in the law and in politics; and Lincoln was besides, creating a society of his own. He made Speed's store his headquarters, and as cold weather drew on, the ablest men of the town gathered round its friendly fire of logs for news-mongering and discussion. The younger of them seem also to have established a sort of informal literary and debating club, which met either in Speed's room, or at the law-office of one of its members. For this Lincoln seems to have written verses.

More public and formal were the meetings of the Young Men's Lyceum, before which Lincoln, in the course of the autumn, delivered an eloquent and highly rhetorical address on "The Perpetuation of our Political Institutions." He argued, in true American style, that his country had nothing to fear from the

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix B.

rest of the world, though all governments should combine against her ; "as a nation of freemen we must live through all time, or die by suicide."

The danger against which he warned his hearers was the "Mobocratic Spirit" of lynch law. Now that the men of the Revolution were dead, he regarded the American love of order, and especially of the Constitution, as the one guarantee of national freedom. Passion has helped us in the past ; "it can do so no more. It will in future be our enemy. Reason—cold, calculating, unimpassioned reason—must furnish all the materials for our future support and defence."

"Let reverence for the laws be breathed by every American mother to the lisping babe that prattles on her lap ; let it be taught in schools, in seminaries, and in colleges ; let it be written in primers, spelling-books, and in almanacs ; let it be preached from the pulpit, proclaimed in legislative halls, and enforced in Courts of Justice. And in short, let it become the political religion of the nation ; and let the old and the young, the rich and the poor, the grave and the gay of all sexes, and tongues, and colours, and conditions, sacrifice unceasingly upon its altars."

And he added significantly :

"When I so pressingly urge a strict observance of all the laws, let me not be understood as saying there are no bad laws, or that grievances may not arise for the redress of which no legal provisions have been made. I mean to say no such thing. But I do mean to say that although bad laws, if they exist, should be repealed as soon as possible, still, while they continue in force, for the sake of example, they should be religiously observed. So also in unprovided cases. If such arise, let proper

legal provisions be made for them with the least possible delay, but till then let them, if not too intolerable, be borne with. There is no grievance that is a fit object of redress by mob law. In any case that may arise, as, for instance, the promulgation of abolitionism, one of two positions is necessarily true—that is, the thing is right within itself, and therefore deserves the protection of all law and all good citizens, or it is wrong, and therefore proper to be prohibited by legal enactments ; and in neither case is the interposition of mob law either necessary, justifiable, or excusable.”

In another passage he pictured the advent of a despotic genius, and again declared that a constitutional habit in the people is the only safeguard of liberty. He said :

“ It is to deny what the history of the world tells us is true, to suppose that men of ambition and talents will not continue to spring up amongst us. And when they do, they will as naturally seek the gratification of their ruling passion as others have done before them. The question then is, Can that gratification be found in supporting and maintaining an edifice that has been erected by others ? Most certainly it cannot. Many great and good men, sufficiently qualified for any task they should undertake, may ever be found whose ambition would aspire to nothing beyond a seat in Congress, a gubernatorial or a presidential chair ; but such belong not to the family of the lion, or the tribe of the eagle. What ! think you these places would satisfy an Alexander, a Cæsar, or a Napoleon ? Never ! Towering genius disdains a beaten path. It seeks regions hitherto unexplored. It sees no distinction in adding story to story upon the monuments of fame erected to the

memory of others. It denies that it is glory enough to serve under any chief. It scorns to tread in the footsteps of any predecessor, however illustrious. It thirsts and burns for distinction; and if possible, it will have it, whether at the expense of emancipating slaves or enslaving freemen. Is it unreasonable, then, to expect that some man possessed of the loftiest genius, coupled with ambition sufficient to push it to its utmost stretch, will at some time spring up among us? And when such an one does, it will require the people to be united with each other, attached to the government and laws, and generally intelligent, to successfully frustrate his designs."

These passages, from one of the earliest of his published speeches, florid as they are, may yet serve to indicate the sound constitutional foundation upon which was raised the whole structure of that political life which he was now commencing in the new capital of his State.

Major Stuart was absorbed all through the autumn and succeeding months in other affairs than those of the law, and set his younger partner a bad business example. He was a candidate for Congress, and his opponent was the prosecuting Attorney of the Eighth Circuit—the circuit on which Stuart and Lincoln were engaged—young Stephen Douglas, who also had come to Springfield this year. After a close and exciting contest, Douglas was narrowly defeated.

Lincoln was in the meantime doing the clerical work of the firm, and thinking out for himself his own cases and problems: he was also adding to the popularity he had won as an adroit political log-roller, by his fearless and somewhat robustious exposure of



the frauds of a successful local office-seeker.<sup>1</sup> He was undaunted in his attack, and became known to his fellow-citizens less as a lawyer than as a bold and capable politician, outspoken, but able to prove his assertions. He was re-elected to the legislature, both in 1838 and 1840; and on both occasions was nominated by his party for the speakership, but was defeated by the Democratic majority in the House.

During this period he came into frequent collision with Douglas, the most brilliant, popular, and successful of the younger politicians of the State. Though the two men stood on a certain equality in the Illinois legislature, Lincoln was only the leader of a minority, and the young lawyer from Vermont, supported by the dominant party in the State, was easily outstripping him in his race for larger, and more profitable, political honours. He had, moreover, matured earlier than his rival, and his ready and rapid brain gave him an advantage over Lincoln, with his slower movements. But in hard reasoning and in the honest and lucid statement of the facts of a case, Lincoln retained the superiority. There was amusing evidence of this on the occasion, during the winter of 1839, when he de-

<sup>1</sup> Lincoln exhibited considerable power in dealing with insolent opponents. Here, for example, is the conclusion of his retort to a certain Mr Forquer, which alludes to the fact that this local personage had erected a lightning-rod, the only one Lincoln had then seen, over his house. It is reported by Joshua Speed: "I desire to live," said the young politician, "and I desire place and distinction; but I would rather die now, than, like the gentleman [Mr Forquer], live to see the day that I would change my politics for an office worth \$3000 a year, and then feel compelled to erect a lightning-rod, to protect a guilty conscience from an offended God." This sounds very like rhetorical clap-trap; it was possibly honest, probably allowable, and certainly effective; it is the sort of argument that Douglas made his own, but one cannot help feeling it belongs to a rather young Lincoln.



molished Douglas's plausible defence of the Democratic Administration, examining the statements in detail, and riddling one after another by the obvious but difficult device of producing adequate evidence of their falsity.

The two men, about this time, became rivals in another field. They both loved society, and were admitted to the best that Springfield could offer. In 1839 this found a focus in the person of an audacious Kentucky beauty, connected by marriage with the family of the former governor of Illinois. Mary Todd was the daughter of a prosperous bank-president of Lexington, a girl of generous education, conspicuous talents, and high temper. Her long sojourn in Springfield seems to have been due to the incompatibility of her temper with that of her step-mother. Her sister had married Ninian Edwards the younger, who was among the principal citizens of the little capital. Edwards had been one of the "Long Nine" who represented Sangamon County in the Legislature, and was, besides, a friend of Joshua Speed. But although Lincoln and he may have come into some degree of intimacy, yet the consternation of the Edwardses must have been great when Miss Todd announced her betrothal to this plebeian country lawyer, nine years her senior.

In many respects it was an unfortunate attachment, subject to continual jars and misunderstandings. There was, moreover, in the incongruity of the parties, something that recalled Beauty and the Beast—Mary Todd, a little creature compact of brilliance, coquetry and temper, and the loosely-knit, gigantic Lincoln, never seeming so awkward, clumsy, and slow as when in her company. It is not difficult to understand his

first fascination by the vividness and vivacity of her personality. But he was soon as much perplexed as he was fascinated. He was very susceptible to the charms of the cultured and brilliant young women into whose society he was now almost for the first time being introduced ; and, during the year or two which preceded his marriage, his peace of mind was troubled by other attractive ladies, as well as by the vagaries of Miss Todd.<sup>1</sup> Miss Todd was socially ambitious, and maintained that she was going to marry a future president. For some time she carried on a vigorous flirtation with Douglas ; and if, as many would have us believe, she was wholly guided by ambition in her final choice, it is difficult to see why she did not marry him. He would certainly have brought her more immediate success, and would have made a much more presentable husband. For it was not much earlier than this that an Englishman, resident in Illinois, refused the legal services of Lincoln because, as he said, he looked too much "like a rustic on his first visit to the circus." Miss Todd was not the woman to overlook externals, but she had more insight than is usually credited to her. Speaking of the two men, she said some years after her marriage : " Mr Lincoln may not be as handsome a figure [as Mr Douglas], but the people are perhaps not aware that his heart is as large as his arms are long." It seems obvious, indeed, that, unless she had really loved Lincoln, she would not have married him, and this appears only the more certain as one weighs the unsatisfying explanations

<sup>1</sup> Lamon says that Lincoln was devoted to Matilda Edwards, and that he told Mary so : while Herndon mentions a proposal of marriage in 1840 to a Sarah Rickard, a girl of 16.

for the marriage offered by relatives and friends. Mrs Edwards declares it was ambition on Mary's part ; others say it was due to ambition on the part either of the Edwardses or of Lincoln. One of the few pieces of real evidence is supplied by Joshua Speed, who tells how Lincoln was at one time down-cast and miserable, feeling he did not love her enough to marry her. Speed advised him to go and settle the matter in a personal encounter instead of by letter, as Lincoln had proposed. When she had heard his confession, Mary sprang from her chair, wringing her hands, and saying enigmatically that the deceiver was deceived. As Lincoln reported the incident : " I found the tears running down my own cheeks. I caught her in my arms and kissed her." On being chaffed by his friend for so ignominious a defeat, he said, " Well, if I am in again, so be it. It's done, and I shall abide by it."

In the end, he did " abide by it," but for two miserable years the fluctuations and uncertainty continued, and whenever he attempted to decide the issue his whole being seemed to become hopelessly bewildered. The reader is often provoked at once to compassion and amusement by the tragi-comedy of indecision through which this clear-eyed logician had to pass. He distrusted passion : he would fain calculate to a nicety the probable result of any step he was about to take. But the consequence of such a step as this no man could estimate. For there was an element of caprice, one perhaps related to the insanity of her later years, in the character of Miss Todd, with which he was unable to reckon. There was, besides, his own abysmal melancholy and morbid conscientiousness.

When the marriage was first arranged, he sank into such misery that, on the first day of 1841, he broke off the painful relationship, hoping thereby to regain his former self-respect and power of decision. But instead, he plunged deeper into despair. He had now, he conceived, acted dishonourably; he had injured an infinitely delicate, passionate creature with his clumsy hands. "To remain as I am is impossible; I must die or get better," he wrote to Stuart.

He was puzzled by his miserable condition, and consulted one or two doctors, who gave him little comfort. Then friendship came to his aid. Joshua Speed, whose bed Lincoln had shared during the first four years of his life in Springfield, and who was the closest and most intimate of all his friends, went on a visit to his old home in Kentucky, and carried Lincoln with him. So black was the cloud of melancholy under which this holiday began, that, in his despair of ever effecting anything worthy of his ambition to "link his name with something that would redound to the interest"<sup>1</sup> of his fellows, Lincoln seems to have entertained the thought of suicide.

But now the burden of his pre-occupation was lightened by a singular coincidence. Speed became engaged, and fell at the same time into a despondency similar in many respects to Lincoln's. The parts of the two men were, from this time, reversed; it was Speed who now required assurance, and Lincoln who offered it. And this was well, for the former was about to leave Springfield, and Lincoln's solitude

<sup>1</sup> J. F. Speed in *Herndon and Weik*.

of soul, if it had been unrelieved by this office of vicarious faith, would have been unendurable. Letters had now to replace the intimate conversations of these close comrades, letters in which the one who remained bereaved and alone sought painfully to attain for himself and for his friend the faith which the situation of both men required.

Few pages he ever wrote give us so certain a glimpse into the depth of Lincoln's heart, as the letters he sent to Speed during the early part of 1842.<sup>1</sup> "You well know," he wrote in February, "that I do not feel my own sorrows much more keenly than I do yours, when I know of them; and yet I assure you I was not much hurt by what you wrote me of your excessively bad feeling at the time you wrote. Not that I am less capable of sympathising with you now than ever, not that I am less your friend than ever, but because I hope and believe that your present anxiety and distress about her health and her life must and will for ever banish those horrid doubts which I know you sometimes felt as to the truth of your affection for her. If they can once and forever be removed (and I almost feel a presentiment that the Almighty has sent your present affliction expressly for that object), surely nothing can come in their stead to fill their immeasurable measure of misery. . . . Why, Speed, if you did not love her, although you might not wish her death, you would most certainly be resigned to it. Perhaps this point is no longer a question with you, and my pertinacious dwelling upon it is a rude

<sup>1</sup> Herndon only obtained these letters from Speed with difficulty, and they appear in *Herndon and Weik* with several erasures or omissions.

intrusion upon your feelings. If so, you must pardon me. You know the hell I have suffered on that point, and how tender I am upon it."

Speed seems to have been convinced, and was presently married. At this time his friend wrote, "When this shall reach you, you will have been Fanny's husband several days. You know my desire to befriend you is everlasting ; that I will never cease while I know how to do anything. But you will always hereafter be on ground that I have never occupied, and, consequently, if advice were needed, I might advise wrong. I do fondly hope, however, that you will never again need any comfort from abroad."

And, again, a little later, in answer to a happy letter, he said, "You know I am sincere when I tell you the pleasure its contents gave me was, and is, inexpressible. As to your farm matter, I have no sympathy with you. I have no farm, nor ever expect to have, and consequently have not studied the subject enough to be much interested with it. I can only say that I am glad you are satisfied and pleased with it.

"But on that other subject, to me of the most intense interest, whether in joy or sorrow, I never had the power to withhold my sympathy from you. It cannot be told how it now thrills me with joy to hear you say you are 'far happier than you ever expected to be.' That much I know is enough. I know you too well to suppose your expectations were not, at least sometimes, extravagant, and if the reality exceeds them all, I say, 'Enough, dear Lord.' I am not going beyond the truth when I tell you that the short space it took



me to read your last letter, gave me more pleasure than the total sum of all I have enjoyed since the fatal 1st of January 1841. Since then, it seems to me, I should have been entirely happy, but for the never-absent idea that there is one still unhappy whom I have contributed to make so. That still kills my soul. I cannot but reproach myself for even wishing to be happy while she is otherwise. She accompanied a large party on the railroad cars to Jacksonville last Monday, and on her return spoke, so that I heard of it, of having enjoyed the trip exceedingly. God be praised for that.

"You know with what sleepless vigilance I have watched you ever since the commencement of your affair."

It is evident, from these last words, that Miss Todd was, herself, the main cause of Lincoln's unhappiness. He had, perhaps, better ground to doubt his own passion than had Joshua Speed. He felt he could truthfully say he would be happy if she could only release and forget him. But she could not. And in his large-hearted way, he loved her too kindly to endure the thought that she was suffering for his sake. A social barrier had arisen between them; they did not meet one another now for a period of eighteen months. But the relationship into which they had been drawn could not even thus be terminated. And Lincoln gradually recognised that, for better or worse, it must proceed to its consummation.

Meanwhile, he often argued with himself against the black foreboding, the sense of an impending tragedy, which overwhelmed him at the thought of this marriage. It had been only "nerves" in the case of his friend;

doubtless it was "all the worst sort of nonsense" in his own. But the shadow did not lift; he could not convince his own soul.

The long indecision, and the hopelessness of reaching a solution, became humiliating to him. But in the midst of it he seems to have found some sort of half-mystical faith that his life and lot were fore-ordained. Joshua Speed's mother had sent him a Bible, to which he refers in the following sentences from a letter of September 27, 1841, to Speed's sister Mary, with whom, for a time, he corresponded:

"Tell your mother that I have not got her present with me, but I intend to read it regularly when I return home. I doubt not that it is really, as she says, the best cure for the blues, *could one but take it according to the truth.*" The last words are full of significance; he was feeling after the ultimate sanctions of religion.

Evidently about this time he began to read the Bible for himself, and found some kind of comfort in its pages. "Whatever He designs, He will do for me yet. 'Stand still and see the Salvation of the Lord' is my text just now," he wrote in the July before his wedding.

About that date, through the contrivance of a friend, intercourse between the pair was re-established, and they soon drifted once again into intimacy. Here, as elsewhere in his career, Lincoln's action was guided largely by the importunity of circumstance, and a grotesque and almost trivial incident cemented his attachment to Mary Todd. He had contributed an anonymous lampoon to a Whig newspaper, upon the person and political career of a certain Irishman,

Shields, who was then attracting public attention. Its humour was rather grossly personal, without being exactly offensive, and it was interwoven with a masterly political argument. Altogether it made excellent copy for the *Springfield Journal*, as the following passage from the imaginary discussion of Aunt 'Becca and one of her Democratic neighbours about a monetary proclamation of Shields will show. Jeff is denouncing it, and its author's defence, in unmeasured terms as a piece of Whig trickery. "Shields is a fool as well as a liar. With him truth is out of the question; and as for getting a good, bright, passable lie out of him, you might as well try to strike fire out of a cake of tallow. I stick to it, it's all an infernal Whig lie. . . . I tell you, Aunt 'Becca, there's no mistake about his being a Whig. Why, his very looks show it; everything about him shows it: if I was deaf and blind, I could tell him by the smell. I seed him when I was down in Springfield last winter. They had a sort of gatherin' there one night among the grandees they called a Fair. And the gals about town was there, and all the handsome widows and married women, finickin' about tryin' to look like gals, tied as tight in the middle, and puffed out at both ends, like bundles of fodder that hadn't been stacked yet, but wanted stackin' pretty bad. And then they had tables all round the house kivered over with . . . caps and pincushions and ten thousand such little knicknacks, tryin' to sell 'em to the fellows that were bowin' and scrapin' and kungeerin' about 'em. They wouldn't let no Democrats in, for fear they'd disgust the ladies, or scare the little gals, or dirty the floor. I looked in at the window, and there was this same fellow Shields floatin' about on the

air, without heft or earthly substance, just like a lock of cat-fur where cats had been fighting,

“He was paying his money to this one, and that one, and t’other one, and sufferin’ great loss because it wasn’t silver instead of State paper; and the sweet distress he seemed to be in—his very features, in the ecstatic agony of his soul, spoke audibly and distinctly, ‘Dear girls, it is distressing, but I cannot marry you all. Too well I know how much you suffer; but do, do remember, it is not my fault that I am so handsome and interesting.’

“As this last was expressed by a most exquisite contortion of his face, he seized hold of one of their hands, and squeezed, and held on to it about a quarter of an hour. ‘Oh, my good fellow!’ says I to myself, ‘if that was one of our Democratic gals in the Lost Townships, the way you’d get a brass pin let into you would be about up to the head.’ He a Democrat! Fiddlesticks! I tell you, Aunt ’Becca he’s a Whig, and no mistake; nobody but a Whig could make such a conceity dunce of himself.”

Lincoln was of course a Whig himself, and Shields a Democrat. A reading of the Letter helps one to understand why, when he was President, he once declared that he would gladly renounce his office in exchange for the genius that wrote “Petroleum V. Nasby’s” satirical letters at the expense of the Peace Democrats during the War. They were in the same vein, but were, upon the whole, brighter and more effective.

The article was certainly calculated to irritate its sensitive victim, who was transported with rage at the half-malicious caricature contained in the letter of

"Aunt Rebecca" from "the Lost Townships." His mood was not improved when, in a subsequent issue, Miss Todd, who had been annoyed by his attentions, added her satire to that of Lincoln. Shields demanded the author's name; and, before he well realised what was occurring, Lincoln found himself involved in a duel.

The matter was now serious enough, yet it was rendered absurd by his quizzical choice of the largest cavalry broadswords as weapons; he had learnt to handle these in the days of the Black Hawk War, and they naturally gave an immense advantage to the long-armed giant over his diminutive fire-eating foe. At the last moment an accommodation was arranged by some of Lincoln's friends, and the whole affair ended in buffoonery. It is one of the passages in his life to which his friends rarely ventured to refer in his presence. He was not proud of his appearance and part in the incident: indeed, though a few years earlier it passed very well as a party to a rough wrestling-bout, Lincoln's figure now seems singularly out of place in a duel. No one felt the incongruity more than he did.

These events occurred towards the end of September. Six weeks later he was married to Mary Todd at the house of Ninian Edwards, and whatever else may be affirmed or denied of the consequences of this event, it seems, at least, to have relieved his mind of its nightmare of indecision, and to have brought back to him the clear vision of his purpose. For the rest it is enough to say that the marriage was neither a very happy nor a really unfortunate one, but it was certainly one from which love was not absent.

He had confessed, in a letter to Speed, that he had

dreamed dreams of Elysium far exceeding all that anything earthly could realise. He had loved Ann Rutledge, and his love for her had promised a union very different from that which was now in store for him. Marriage, as it has been stereotyped by our present civilisation is, at the best, a sufficiently exacting relationship for a man of scrupulously conscientious temper ; the character of the two parties in this case rendered it exceptionally difficult. Thus we can hardly speak of Lincoln's as a fortunate marriage. Yet a happier one might, conceivably, have contributed less to develop a character which grew in strength and nobility with every difficulty it overcame, since it would have called for less of the patience and tenderness which were now to be demanded by the conditions of his home.

The story of Lincoln's engagement has carried us too hastily past other events of the period over which it cast its stormy lights and shadows. Lincoln and Douglas often met on the political battle-fields of 1840, during that historic canvass when, owing to the indiscretion of a Southern journal, which had scornfully alluded to the supposed rusticity of the Whig candidate, a wild wave of popular feeling overwhelmed the Democratic party. Lincoln had taken his share in organising the Whigs, and now spoke at many of their huge, open-air meetings. He might have been seen standing in a waggon on some large, open space, addressing the thousands of farmers who were gathered by the excitement of the contest from the whole region round. It is amusing to find this whilom advocate of "cold, unimpassioned reason" shouting, cheering, and proclaiming himself eager for any "war-club" with



which to effect the success of "Log-Cabin" Harrison and the discomfiture of Andrew Jackson's followers.

The only incident of the campaign that concerns us is that known among his biographer as "the skinning of Thomas." Lincoln had been stung by this antagonist into a vigorous vindication whose scathing ridicule and irresistible mimicry reduced the aggressor to tears of humiliation. From the party point of view the performance was a complete success, and partly as such, but partly from the fact that it seemed somewhat out of character for Lincoln, it was the talk of the town. The victor, however, was not satisfied. He hunted up his victim and with generous words took the sting out of his punishment. It was, indeed, a somewhat unworthy success of which he was ashamed. Such exhibitions of his power to annihilate an opponent who had been guilty of foul-play, caused him too much sympathetic suffering and remorse to be often repeated.

The presidential campaign being over, and the Whig candidate duly elected, Lincoln went back to the law. But in April, 1841, his partner, Major Stuart, who, as we have seen, had defeated Douglas for Congress, left Springfield for Washington. At this juncture, Stephen Logan, then perhaps the most accurate, studious, and best technically equipped lawyer in the State, having lost his own partner from the same cause, entered into a new combination with Lincoln. A little weazened man, with a shrill voice, even more careless of his appearance, if that were possible, than his tall junior, Logan had many of the qualities that Lincoln lacked, and their partnership not only produced a very powerful alliance, but encouraged the younger man in the serious study of the law. But Logan had

a very different temper from his partner's, and while accumulating affluence for himself seems to have allotted but a small share of their earnings to Lincoln. The latter, though he always regarded wealth as "simply a superfluity of things we don't need," was naturally generous and could not long continue in close relations with a man of this character. After two years and a half, he separated from Logan and became the senior in a partnership with William H. Herndon,<sup>1</sup> afterwards his biographer. This continued to the end of his life.

After eight years in the State legislature, Lincoln's ambition, quickened perhaps by Miss Todd, and by his late partner's success, now began to look towards Washington. His friends, also, by this time, had recognised that his ability and faithful service of the State demanded wider recognition. In 1841, he seems to have been offered the party nomination for the governorship of Illinois, an office he had formerly coveted. But he now declined the offer, partly because he desired to go to Washington, partly because he could not afford wholly to relinquish his legal work. Friends of Mrs Lincoln assert that, for her part, she had already reserved her future husband for the Presidency. Presumably she did not, at the time, regard the Executive Mansion at Springfield as upon the direct road to that higher office. And it may be they were both more eager for the political life and society of Washington than for anything else that Illinois could offer them.

<sup>1</sup> Herndon, who also came from Kentucky, was nine years Lincoln's junior, and his father was one of the "Long Nine." The young man had been Speed's clerk, and seems to have become acquainted with Lincoln in the New Salem days when he visited cousins in that village. He was later a student in Logan & Lincoln's office.

Whatever the cause for declining to contest the governorship, their immediate ambition was destined to disappointment. Lincoln did not receive the nomination for Congress till 1846, and one, at least, of the reasons assigned by him for this delay sounds almost as singular to us as it did at the time to him. He was denounced by some as the candidate of the aristocratic section of his party—presumably because of his marriage—and by the more orthodox for Deism, and for having talked about fighting a duel.

The accusation of rationalism was not ill founded. Anyone who will read the temperance address delivered by him on Washington's Birthday (22nd February) 1842, in the Presbyterian church at Springfield, must recognise the recurring appeal to Reason, and feel the unmistakable air of detachment from organised Christianity which breathes in certain paragraphs. It strikes again the note of revulsion from all passion, and of an ardent expectation of the proximate Reign of Reason, the "absolute control of mind."

There was a rumour abroad that he had formerly written an attack upon orthodoxy after the manner of Tom Paine. And altogether it can hardly be wondered that the religionists of the county now looked askance upon his nomination and gave the place to a less disputable candidate. Lincoln was never, as far as is known, a member of any denomination, though his father seems to have been a religious man, and he himself in later life went regularly to the Presbyterian church in Washington which his wife attended. The lengthy defence of Deism which he seems to have written at New Salem, had been

consigned to Speed's stove by a politic companion, in fear lest it should be published to the world. Probably the man acted wisely. Lincoln's *rôle* was not to be that of a Colonel Ingersoll.

Neither was it to be that of a temperance lecturer. Indeed he once positively declined the title of a "temperance man" with which a political opponent was attempting to label him; adding simply, "I'm temperate in this, to wit—I don't drink." But the subject of temperance, especially in the sense of self-control, was one which always interested him deeply. He had a wholesome human sympathy for the victims of the alcohol habit, and his faith in the efficacy of friendship made him detest the attitude of those Levites and Pharisees who, calling themselves Christians, yet refused to associate with publicans and sinners. All these, and other characteristics of the man, are illustrated in the following passages from his address in the Presbyterian Church:

"'But,' say some, 'we are no drunkards, and we shall not acknowledge ourselves such by joining a re-form drunkard's society, whatever our influence might be.' Surely no Christian will adhere to this objection.

"If they believe, as they profess, that Omnipotence condescended to take on himself the form of sinful man, and, as such, to die an ignominious death for their sakes, surely they will not refuse submission to the infinitely lesser condescension, for the temporal and perhaps eternal salvation of a large, erring, and unfortunate class of their fellow-creatures. Nor is the condescension very great. In my judgment, such of us as have never fallen victims have been spared more by the absence of appetite, than from any

mental or moral superiority over those who have. Indeed I believe, if we take habitual drunkards as a class, their heads and their hearts will bear an advantageous comparison with those of any other class."

"If you would win a man to your cause, first convince him that you are his sincere friend. Therein is a drop of honey that catches his heart, which, say what he will, is the great high-road to his reason, and which, when once gained, you will find but little trouble in convincing his judgment of the justice of your cause, if indeed that cause really be a just one. On the contrary, assume to dictate to his judgment, or to command his action, or to mark him as one to be shunned and despised, and he will retreat within himself, close all the avenues to his head and his heart; and though your cause be naked truth itself, transformed to the heaviest lance, harder than steel, and sharper than steel can be made, and though you throw it with more than herculean force and precision, you shall be no more able to pierce him than to penetrate the hard shell of a tortoise with a rye straw. Such is man, and so must he be understood by those who would lead him, even to his own best interests. . . .

"Another error, as it seems to me, into which the old reformers fell, was the position that all habitual drunkards were utterly incorrigible, and therefore must be turned adrift and damned without remedy in order that the grace of temperance might abound, to the temperate then, and to all mankind some hundreds of years thereafter. There is in this something so repugnant to humanity, so uncharitable, so cold-



blooded and feelingless, that it never did, nor never can enlist the enthusiasm of a popular cause. We could not love the man who taught it—we could not hear him with patience. The heart could not throw open its portals to it, the generous man could not adopt it—it could not mix with his blood. It looked so fiendishly selfish, so like throwing fathers and brothers overboard to lighten the boat for our security, that the noble-minded shrank from the manifest meanness of the thing. And besides this, the benefits of a reformation to be effected by such a system were too remote in point of time to warmly engage many in its behalf. Few can be induced to labour exclusively for posterity; and none will do it enthusiastically. Posterity has done nothing for us; and theorise on it as we may, practically we shall do very little for it, unless we are made to think we are at the same time doing something for ourselves.

“What an ignorance of human nature does it exhibit, to ask or expect a whole community to rise up and labour for the temporal happiness of others, after themselves shall be consigned to the dust, a majority of which community take no pains whatever to secure their own eternal welfare at no more distant day! Great distance in either time or space has wonderful power to lull and render quiescent the human mind. Pleasures to be enjoyed, or pains to be endured, after we shall be dead and gone, are but little regarded even in our own cases, and much less in the cases of others. Still, in addition to this, there is something so ludicrous in promises of good or threats of evil a great way off as to render the whole subject with which they are connected easily turned into ridicule.



‘Better lay down that spade you are stealing, Paddy; if you don’t you’ll pay for it at the day of judgment.’ ‘Be the powers, if ye’ll credit me so long I’ll take another, jist.’”

While referring to this subject, we must not omit a characteristic paragraph taken from a letter written on the day of the lecture referred to above. This letter is a shrewd and friendly appeal to a young fellow who had apparently given way to drink, now, on the birthday of the great revolutionary leader, to recruit for this, the nobler Revolution, which was destined to break the yoke, not merely of a foreign despotism, but of a moral and civil slavery. The lad had evidently got himself into a scrape, and his friend urged him to make a clean breast of the offence, offering his aid in dealing with an offended uncle. “I never encourage deceit,” he writes in earnest playfulness, “and falsehood, especially if you have got a bad memory, is the worst enemy a fellow can have. The fact is, truth is your truest friend, no matter what the circumstances are. Notwithstanding this copy-book preamble, my boy, I am inclined to suggest a *little prudence* on your part. You see, I have a congenital aversion to failure, and the sudden announcement to your Uncle Andrew of the success of your ‘lamp-rubbing’ might possibly prevent you passing the severe *physical* examination to which you will be subjected, in order to enter the Military Academy.”

It was toward the end of this year that Mr and Mrs Lincoln began their married life in a boarding-house “very well kept by a widow lady of the name of Beck.” If the accommodation of her house corresponded with her terms, it must have been of a rigid





LINCOLN'S HOME AT SPRINGFIELD, 1860, WITH LINCOLN AND ONE OF  
HIS SONS IN THE GARDEN.

simplicity ; for the bridal pair paid her altogether some sixteen or seventeen shillings a week for food and lodging. Under her roof their first child, Robert, was born. Presently, when Lincoln's income justified it, he removed to a comfortable, unpretending house of his own, which he occupied as long as he remained in Springfield. Three other sons were born to him there, but none of them came to maturity.

From the time he left the Legislature and entered on his partnership with Logan—a year or two before his marriage—Lincoln devoted more of his energy to his profession, steadily rising in the esteem of his companions on the Eighth Circuit, as a conscientious, just and able lawyer. As might be surmised from what we already know of him, he was powerful in his appeals both to the reason and the emotion of the jury. His arguments were candid and convincing because he thought clearly, felt warmly, knew his facts and was a master of exposition. He was as honest a lawyer as old Sir Thomas More, and steadily refused cases in which he could not conscientiously support his client's cause. Indeed, when his sense of justice was not enlisted, his powers of persuasion were paralyzed and he made but a poor advocate.

He was not a learned, perhaps he was not even a great lawyer, in any technical sense ; but in the Illinois of 1840 to 1860, it seems probable that he was the one man of all the bar most effective for justice. Singleness of sight, originality of thought, shrewdness and mastery of resources, sound practical knowledge, and common-sense dashed with a powerful vein of pathetic eloquence, and another of satire, and all interwoven together by his inimitable gift of

appropriate anecdote, rendered Lincoln more valuable to that community than if these qualities had been replaced by greater method and erudition.

Indeed, at this point, one ought to say frankly, that Lincoln's genius must have been thwarted and hindered from its full development by anything like an ordinary education. The secret of his growth into mastery lay in his having to find his own way, and depend upon his own resources under difficult circumstances. By this process, his mind became exceptionally well-adapted to its tasks, and if one may say so, extraordinarily muscular. There was no flabbiness about his thinking. He never took more material into his mind than it could use and assimilate. In this he was undoubtedly assisted by a certain deliberateness of mental movement very marked in him. His speech was slow. He loved leisure, and had, as we have several times had occasion to note, great power of mentally shutting himself away from his surroundings; thus, on circuit, he was often a somewhat absent spectator even of the mirth of his company. His slowness of reaction to mental stimulus has often been noticed. He observed his own processes with interest and once summing the matter up, he said to Herndon: "I may not emit ideas as rapidly as others, because I am compelled by nature to speak slowly; but when I do throw off a thought, it seems to me, though it comes with some effort, it has force enough to cut its own way and travel a greater distance. . . ."

The life on Circuit was one which he thoroughly enjoyed: it was full of movement, Bohemianism and adventure—one of continual intercourse with

men, and especially with young men, broken by long, solitary rides through forest and prairie. It was, in short, a life that gave full play to a personality which could ill have endured the routine of an office, or the respectable dulness of a suburban home.

But if he was thus working hard at a profession, which more than any other was calculated to develop his peculiar powers, his heart was still set upon achieving political distinction. Nearly all of his ablest rivals and companions on the Circuit had a similar aim. It was not until after his own term in Congress, and his consequent disillusionment, that he devoted his undivided energy to the law.



## Chapter IV

# In Congress

Growth of Anti-slavery Feeling—Lincoln on the Tariff—In Washington  
—Electioneering—End of the Session—Returns to Springfield.

AT this point we must review the political events of the time as they affected Lincoln's life. The feeling against slavery to which he had so guardedly given expression in his resolutions of 1837, had been continually gaining adherents throughout the Northern States. With the growth of this constitutional anti-slavery sentiment came a new line of division in politics, a line which now separated the followers of Henry Clay from those of John C. Calhoun, the statesman of South Carolina and at this time the most powerful personality in the Democratic party. While Clay and the Whigs repudiated as revolutionary, the abolitionist demand for immediate emancipation, they hoped for the ultimate extinction of slavery and asserted the right of that free discussion so abhorrent to Southern sentiment.

Calhoun wished to render any attack upon the great domestic institution of the South impossible; and in order to achieve this end he promulgated the celebrated doctrine of "State Rights," which declared the paramountcy of individual States as against Federal interference. With this he also incorporated

the assertion that every assumption that slavery was immoral, sinful or "otherwise obnoxious" was unconstitutional. In other words he desired all discussion of the question to be put into the category of treasonable acts.

As the position of parties developed it became clear that Clay's was for the Union, with or without slavery, while Calhoun's followers on the one side and the abolitionists on the other, frankly set their own respective objects before that of the nation *per se*, and were willing to divide the Union in order to realise them.

Such was the situation in 1838. But it was becoming yearly more difficult to retain any appearance of neutrality on the question of slavery; and when, in view of the imminent presidential contest, in which he hoped to be elected, Clay had compromised his own personal anti-slavery position in the effort to obtain a larger measure of Southern support, that compromise had seriously affected his standing in the North. Thus he had failed to receive the Whig nomination, which went instead to General Harrison, who, as we have seen, was duly elected.

But hardly had Harrison been inaugurated in 1841, when death overtook him, and his place was filled by the vice-president, Tyler, formerly a Democrat. Under the Southern influences and associations of Washington, Tyler soon reverted to his earlier faith, and forthwith gathered around him a cabinet so Democratic in its complexion that the Whig party deserted him to rally again to Clay, its creator and only real leader. It now carried within it, however, the seeds of disruption—seeds of Clay's own sowing. On the issue under-

lying all others it had spoken with two voices ; it was only ineffectually opposed to slavery.

An incident, which occurred in Indiana during Clay's triumphal progress through the Northern States, well illustrates the dilemma in which the Whigs found themselves. At an enthusiastic meeting, the great Kentuckian was presented with a petition requesting him to emancipate his own slaves. He replied evasively that abolition spelt disunion ; that the one hope for the negro lay in gradual emancipation ; that, as to this petition, it was in bad taste, and its subscribers had better mind their own business, the poor and needy at their very doors. The meeting cheered, the petitioners were discomfited ; Clay was in the right, but he was really dodging a question, which neither he nor the country was ready to answer.

He followed the same course at the next presidential election. Then the immediate issue became that of American relations with Texas, which was seeking admission into the limits of the United States. Annexation was favoured by Polk and the Democrats because they desired the extension of slave-territories. It was, for that reason, denounced by the anti-slavery party. Clay at first opposed it ; but was subsequently induced by Southern Whigs and also by his own patriotic national sentiment to declare — though guardedly — in its favour, and to add that, in any case, his decision could not be affected by slavery. He might favour annexation, but neither annexation nor its refusal could materially alter the destiny of an institution bound to ultimate extinction.

This avowal, though in keeping with his Whig position, naturally satisfied neither party to the slavery

issue, and the number of those who felt strongly on the question of the extension of slavery was sufficient at the moment to turn the electoral scale. The pro-slavery men would support Polk; the earnest anti-slavery men could hardly vote for Clay. This the Whigs did not realise until too late. They counted confidently on success; and when the returns from the State of New York showed that the desertion of its anti-slavery Whigs had cost Clay the presidency, they were inconsolable.

It is easy now to misunderstand the position of the Whig leader. At first sight it seems plain to us that he ought to have taken sides on the slavery question. It seems plain that for America, the slavery question—the question, that is to say, of the progressive development or extinction of the system of slave-industry—underlay at that time every other, and must be decided, and decisive. But in 1844, there were comparatively few Americans who took this view of the situation. It must be remembered that the question was regarded as a sectional, not a national one; and also that the national idea was still feeble. Clay's work was to strengthen it. And though it might be at the cost, for the time-being, of the anti-slavery cause, it was that cause which he was ultimately serving even by his compromises, in so far as he was fostering this national sentiment. For as the men of the North and South, but especially the men of the West, came to realise more fully that they had a common social and political life from which they could not break away at will, they realised also the moral responsibilities of the nation.

It was because men felt that Clay stood for American unity and nationality that they gave him their allegiance as they gave it to no other political leader of his time. He does not stand out as one of the greatest figures in American politics, yet it is doubtful whether any have exercised greater personal sway. While that sway was partly due to his magnetic personality, it was largely due to the idea of America which, more than any man of those days, he embodied. And now, at a moment of crisis, he had been defeated by an antagonist who could not be compared with him for ability. We can understand the consternation of thoughtful men.

To Lincoln, who had devoted himself to the canvass with every expectation of success, the result was like a personal disaster. He heartily believed in this idol of his party, and there is not sufficient evidence to prove that he was disillusionised, as some suppose, in later years. In the course of the autumn he had spoken in all sections of his State, even crossing over into Indiana and revisiting his old home at Gentryville. Here he had been so deeply moved by the familiar sights and sounds that he had sought expression for his feelings—which, at least, he says, “were certainly poetry”—in rough pathetic verses. In these he refers to the twenty years that had passed since he lived there, and the changes that had taken place among his old companions.

“ My childhood’s home I see again,  
And sadden with the view ;  
And still, as memory crowds my brain,  
There’s pleasure in it too.

O Memory ! thou midway world  
'Twixt earth and paradise,  
Where things decayed and loved ones lost  
In dreamy shadows rise,

And, freed from all that's earthly vile,  
Seem hallowed, pure, and bright,  
Like scenes in some enchanted isle  
All bathed in liquid light.

As dusky mountains please the eye  
When twilight chases day ;  
As bugle-notes that, passing by,  
In distance die away ;

As leaving some grand waterfall,  
We, lingering, list its roar—  
So memory will hallow all  
We've known, but know no more."<sup>1</sup>

After the event, Lincoln recognised that Clay's defeat was due to the defection of the abolition Whigs or "Liberty-men." He was always a practical politician and a strong party man, and his view of their attitude is expressed in a letter to one of them written in October 1845.

In this, he points out that by their defeat of Clay, they had sacrificed all the old Whig principles for which they cared, including the limitation of slave territory—for no evident good, and he begs them to return to their old party. As a matter of fact, the Liberty-men seem to have been premature in their action, and the Whig party had yet ten more years of life before its final dissolution.

<sup>1</sup> About this time Lincoln wrote in reference to some comic doggerel which had pleased him, that he would give all he had, and go in debt, to have written verses as fine.



The latter part of Lincoln's letter is unconvincing and savours of mere expediency. Like Clay, he declares himself indifferent on the Texan question. But he adds an interesting statement of his attitude towards the slavery issue. "I hold it to be a paramount duty of us in the free States, due to the Union of the States, and perhaps to liberty itself (paradoxical though it may seem), to let the slavery of the other States alone: while, on the other hand, I hold it to be equally clear that we should never knowingly lend ourselves, directly or indirectly, to prevent that slavery from dying a natural death—to find [*i.e.* by finding] new places for it to live in, when it can no longer exist in the old." It is not easy to see how he could reconcile this with indifference to the annexation of Texas, which was to become in due course a slave State.

In the following spring, May 1846, Lincoln received the long coveted nomination for Congress. His opponent was a well-known and popular itinerant preacher, who renewed the old charges of atheism and aristocracy against him, but this time, without success. After a vigorous campaign of three months, during which the legal business of Lincoln and Herndon devolved entirely on the Junior partner, the Senior was returned by an exceptionally large majority, the only Whig from Illinois.

Early in the canvass, after the threatenings of war with England over the delimitation of the North-Western frontier, actual war had broken out between the United States and Mexico, as a consequence of the Texan annexation. The Whigs of Illinois, while disapproving the President's unconstitutional action in

forcing on the conflict, responded in great numbers to his call for volunteers, and heartily supported the national cause throughout the war. But the war, like Clay's compromise with slavery in '38, involved the party in an apparently ambiguous position, difficult to expound to the popular mind, and requiring all Lincoln's ability of clear statement and convincing logic. His triumph at the polls was thus a double proof of his power and popularity. He was naturally gratified at the result ; but in confidence to Speed he confessed that somehow it had not pleased him as much as he expected.

Before going to Washington, Lincoln seems to have given renewed attention to a question which had long interested him, that of the tariff. He must have frequently discussed it before, and the Circular from the Illinois Whig Committee of 1843 was probably from his pen. That circular declared "that a tariff sufficient for revenue, or a direct tax, must soon be resorted to ; and, indeed, we believe this alternative is now denied by no one. . . . Let us, then, briefly compare the two systems. The tariff is the cheaper system, because the duties, being collected in large parcels at a few commercial points, will require comparatively few officers in their collection ; while, by the direct tax system, the land must be literally covered with assessors and collectors, going forth like swarms of Egyptian locusts, devouring every blade of grass and other green thing. And, again, by the tariff system the whole revenue is paid by the consumers of foreign goods, and those chiefly the luxuries and not the necessities of life. By this system, the man who contents himself to live upon

the products of his own country pays nothing at all. And surely that country is extensive enough, and its products abundant and varied enough, to answer all the real wants of its people."

Now returning to the same subject,<sup>1</sup> he proposed a much more careful analysis, suggested in the following notes :

"Whether the protective policy shall be finally abandoned is now the question.—Discussion and experience already had, and question now in greater dispute than ever.—Has there not been some great error in the mode of discussion?—Propose a single issue of fact, namely : From 1816 to the present, have protected articles cost us more of labour during the higher than during the lower duties upon them?—Introduce the evidence.—Analyze this issue, and try to show that it embraces the true and the whole question of the protective policy.—Intended as a test of experience.—The period selected is fair, because it is a period of peace—a period sufficiently long [to] furnish a fair average under all other causes operating on prices, a period in which various modifications of higher and lower duties have occurred.—Protected articles only are embraced. Show that these only belong to the question.—The labour price only is embraced. Show this to be correct."

In the course of his discussion Lincoln supposes that the farming and manufacturing interests of America are in the hands respectively of one farmer and one manufacturer, who mutually exchange their

<sup>1</sup> But in this case of a protective, not a revenue tariff; one designed to keep out foreign manufactures, and not one dependent upon their continued introduction.

goods until the farmer "discovers that, were it not for the protective policy, he could buy all these supplies cheaper from a European manufacturer, owing to the fact that the price of labour is only one quarter as high there as here." Here he suggests it is a question of labour price.

In the next fragment he proceeds with the daring simplicity of a John Woolman. "In the early days of our race, the Almighty said to the first of our race, 'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread'; and since then, if we except the light and the air of heaven, no good thing has been or can be enjoyed by us without having first cost labour. And inasmuch as most good things are produced by labour, it follows that all such things of right belong to those whose labour has produced them. But it has so happened, in all ages of the world, that some have laboured, and others have, without labour, enjoyed a large proportion of the fruits. This is wrong, and should not continue. To secure to each labourer the whole product of his labour, or as nearly as possible, is a worthy object of any good government."

This noble passage is the pivot of his whole argument. He then discusses the means by which such an object can be effected, and argues that, in order to eliminate useless labour and idleness—"heavy pensioners" upon useful labour, who rob it "of a large portion of its just rights"—commerce and the carrying trade should be regarded as entirely secondary to definitely productive labour. "It appears to me," he says, "that all labour done directly and indirectly in carrying articles to the place of consumption, which could have been produced in sufficient abundance,

with as little labour at the place of consumption as at the place they were carried from, is useless labour. . . This useless labour I would have discontinued, and those engaged in it added to the class of useful labourers." He would discontinue all unnecessary commerce, as extravagant ; and also as tending to injure home markets. Finally, he argues that, since subsistence depends strictly upon useful labour and useless labour cannot in the nature of things, produce subsistence, but even *partial* idleness, and *partial* uselessness of labour must result in *partial* ruin—therefore the abandonment of protection would produce want among the American people.

The facts, necessary to substantiate the argument, are not given in the fragments ; but this simple outline is sufficient to suggest the strength and weakness of Lincoln's position as a protectionist. And, what is more, it gives us a striking glimpse into Lincoln's America, where monopoly and control of world-markets were things as yet unthought of. Sixty years have changed the whole social and industrial fabric of American life.

More than a year intervened between Lincoln's election and the assembling of the new Congress in Washington ; a year during which, under his Whig generals, the Democratic President had waged successful war upon Mexico. With that war and its results Congress was now to be principally occupied.

It was in November 1847 that Mr and Mrs Lincoln went into residence for the Session at a boarding-house on the site of the present Library of Congress. Lincoln was very soon at home in Washington, and delivered what may be regarded as his maiden-speech early in

January. Appointed a member of two Committees, he had already made an experiment "by way of getting the hang of the House," and had been nervous, as he almost always was, at the commencement. But this time, he wrote to Herndon, he had concluded to distinguish himself. He offered the House a series of resolutions, intended to compel the President to defend the unconstitutional acts of aggression by which he had brought on the war with Mexico. His supporting speech was clear and telling, and had moreover the virtue of conciseness, covering the whole subject, and yet concluding well within the allotted time.

An almost cruelly lucid exposure of Polk's duplicity, the speech is perhaps most interesting now for the passage in which Lincoln spoke of the right of revolution, with reference to the people of Texas. "Any people, anywhere," he said, "being inclined and having the power, have the right to rise up and shake off the existing government, and form a new one that suits them better." He spoke of this as a sacred right, and the right by which the liberation of the world is to be effected ; and a right, moreover, which belongs to any group of people ; adding "it is a quality of revolutions not to go by old lines or old laws, but to break up both, and to make new ones." This passage was, subsequently, to be often quoted against him by his Southern opponents when he was elected to the Presidency, and was to be made to justify their secession from the Union. It must be admitted that the passage, in itself, is capable of such use. It, also, however, contains the statement that the majority has the right to put down the minority, and is in short, little more than



an acknowledgment that when the spirit of liberty is strong enough in a people, it has a "right" to burst its old bonds.

The House was impressed by the speaker's earnestness and ability ; but, as by this time, the war was over, and peace about to be made, the President had no difficulty in ignoring the resolutions which thus failed to produce their desired political effect. They expressed, however, the detestation of Lincoln and many others for Polk's unscrupulous policy ; and this moral condemnation, which was widespread, was a factor in the Democratic defeat at the next election.

But in Illinois the resolutions were unpopular, being regarded by the militant Whigs as unpatriotic. They had no desire to be dragged back to the troublesome moral question behind a war which had added, at but little expense, so splendid a territory to the United States. This, however, was just the kind of question which, popular or unpopular, Lincoln, with his keen ethical sense, could not but raise. As he said to Herndon, in justifying his action against home criticism, the situation in Congress rendered silence impossible. He could not skulk even if he wished to, and it was not in him to lie.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The following passages occur in letters written to W. H. Herndon, by Lincoln on 1st and 2nd February 1848 :

"DEAR WILLIAM,—Your letter of the 19th ultimo was received last night, and for which I am much obliged. The only thing in it that I wish to talk to you at once about is, that because of my vote for Ashmun's amendment, you fear that you and I disagree about the war. I regret this, not because of any fear we shall remain disagreed after you have read this letter, but because if you misunderstand I fear other good friends may also. That vote affirms that the war was unnecessarily and unconstitutionally commenced by the President ; and I will stake my life that if you had been in my place you would have voted just as I did. Would you have voted

The other events of the Session in which the member from Illinois took a conspicuous part were the Presidential campaign and the attempt to extinguish slavery in the Federal district of Columbia around the National Capital. Clay's defeat in 1844 had determined the Whig party managers against re-nominating him. In spite of his own obvious desire for the favour and his great claims on the party, men like Lincoln saw clearly that he had no prospect of election. They therefore rallied around the colourless but available General Taylor, whose nomination took the Democrats "on the blind side" and cleverly turned "the war thunder against them," as Lincoln said.

Lincoln's enthusiastic support of Taylor's candidature illustrates what I have already said about his strong party feeling. To all appearance, Taylor—who was popularly known as "Old Rough and Ready"—had no political principles, being held up to Southern admiration as a successful soldier and himself a slaveholding Southerner whose interests would prevent any attack being made by him upon the institution of the South. Lincoln's ardent and effective speeches for

what you felt and knew to be a lie? I know you would not. Would you have gone out of the House—skulked the vote? I expect not. If you had skulked one vote, you would have had to skulk many more before the end of the session. Richardson's resolutions, introduced before I made any move or gave any vote upon the subject, make the direct question of the justice of the war; so that no man can be silent if he would. You are compelled to speak; and your only alternative is to tell the truth or a lie. I cannot doubt which you would do. . . ."

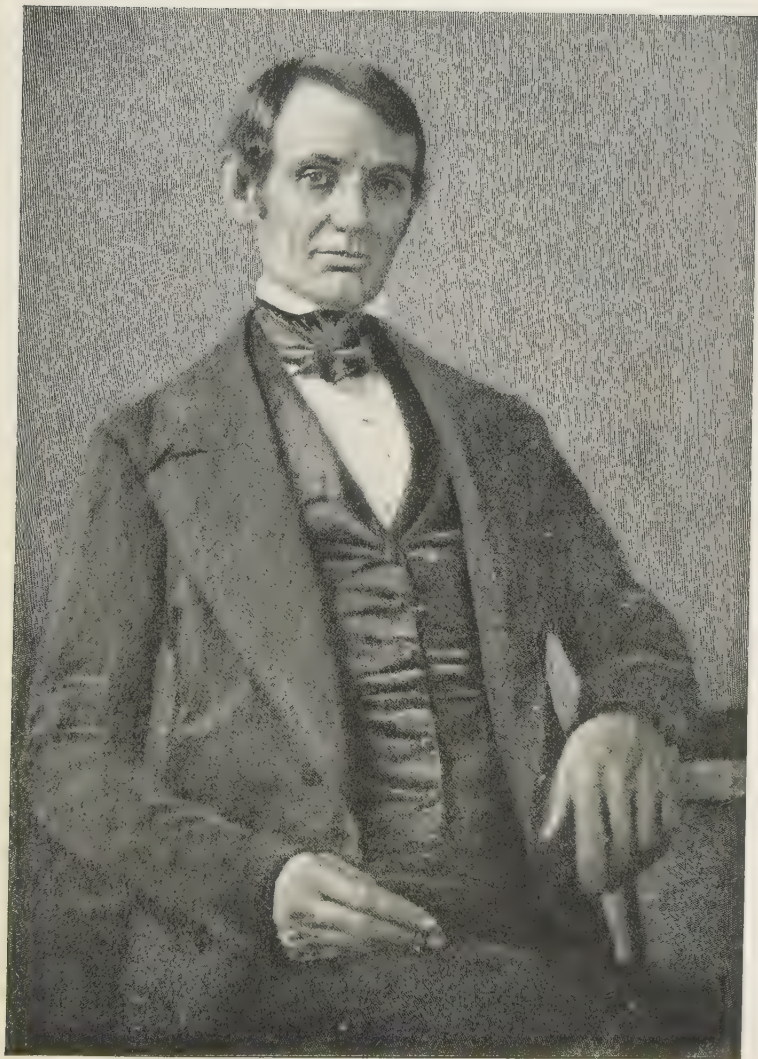
"DEAR WILLIAM,—I just take my pen to say that Mr Stephens, of Georgia, a little, slim, pale-faced, consumptive man, with a voice like Logan's, has just concluded the very best speech of an hour's length I ever heard. My old withered dry eyes are full of tears yet.

"If he writes it out anything like he delivered it, our people shall see a good many copies of it. . . ."

his candidature, are not the most edifying of his utterances. We must suppose that, beside his boyish personal admiration, dating from the Black Hawk War, he regarded Taylor as at least more opposed to slavery-extension than his opponent, the rich Northern Democrat, Cass. Taylor and Cass were the leaders chosen by their respective parties, and Lincoln, though he was probably growing weary of the sterility of the political parties of the day, was still a practical politician and still a Whig.

He made one of Taylor's earliest supporters in Washington, being associated in the formation of a club of so-called "young Indians" with Alexander Stephens, then a Whig, and afterwards vice-president of the Southern Confederacy, a man for whom he had the utmost regard and admiration. He wrote home also, urging upon Herndon the immediate organisation of all the political forces, especially the younger men, the gathering together for party purposes of all those "shrewd, wild boys about town" whom he knew so well. Already at thirty-nine he thought of himself as one of the old men, and was familiarly known in Springfield as "Old Abe": but his sympathies were with the young, and even with the wilder ones among them.

He was one of those who went to Philadelphia in June to nominate Taylor: and towards the end of July, he made one of the most effective of the election speeches then being intruded upon the time and patience of the House. In contrast with his speech of January, it was in his most abandoned style of stump oratory, and, as such, was thoroughly appreciated by his party. The House roared with laughter



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as he walked up and down the aisles, between the members' seats, talking and gesticulating with those huge arms and hands of his, the whole speech a marvellous web of drollery, wit, shrewd party appeals, pitiless analysis, caricature, satire, and outrageous illustration. He ridiculed the military pretensions of the Democratic candidate, comparing them with his own as a mosquito-bitten Captain in the days of the Black Hawk War, when "I fought, bled, and—came away."

The most characteristic passages will hardly bear the critical light which falls upon the printed page, yet their unrestrained grotesque humour so accurately reflects one aspect of their speaker's character that a specimen cannot be omitted. In reply to an accusation of military hero-worship, Lincoln described the attitude of the Democratic party still clinging to the coat-tail of its great general, Jackson. "Now, Sir," quoth Lincoln, "you dare not give it up. Like a horde of hungry ticks you have stuck to the tail of the Hermitage Lion to the end of his life; and you are still sticking to it, and drawing a loathsome sustenance from it after he is dead." Then he lapsed into burlesque anecdote. "A fellow once advertised that he had made a discovery by which he could make a new man out of an old one, and have enough of the stuff left to make a little yellow dog. Just such a discovery has General Jackson's popularity been to you. You not only twice made President of him out of it, but you have had enough of the stuff left to make Presidents of several comparatively small men since;<sup>1</sup> and it is your chief reliance now to make still another."

<sup>1</sup> Referring to Van Buren and Polk.



After the close of the session, he continued the electoral campaign with ardour, first in the East, and afterwards in his own State. He was thus described at the time by one who saw him at a meeting in one of the Massachusetts country towns. "He seemed uneasy and out of sympathy with his surroundings. But at last he arose to speak, and almost instantly there was a change. His indifferent manner vanished as soon as he opened his mouth. He went right to work. He wore a black alpaca sack [coat]; and he turned up the sleeves of this, and then the cuffs of his shirt. Next he loosened his neck-tie, and soon after he took it off altogether. All the time he was gaining upon his audience. He soon had it as by a spell. I never saw men more delighted. His style was the most familiar and off-hand possible. His eye had lighted up and changed the whole expression of his countenance. He began to bubble out with humour. There was no attempt at eloquence or finish of style, but for plain pungency of humour it would have been difficult to surpass his speech." The speaker's immediate object was evidently accomplished. Taylor's candidature was not one to arouse great moral enthusiasm, but it was popular and, in his view, worth supporting. When his hearer declares he never saw men more delighted, he bears testimony to the speaker's power of accomplishing his purpose.

But the real springs of Lincoln's power, when it was fully manifested, lay in his moral fervour and his sense of justice; and his tour in the East was not without important effects upon this deeper side of his political consciousness. Taken in conjunction with

the intimacy he had formed in Washington with Joshua Giddings, one of the ablest leaders of the Abolition movement in the West, it probably brought him to a new political standpoint with regard to the question of slavery. The popular attitude towards it in Illinois was, indeed, far different from that which prevailed in many parts of the Eastern States ; and when, in Boston, he heard Governor Steward's great oration, he was deeply moved. After his own speech, which followed the Governor's, Lincoln had a conversation with the latter in which he said : " I reckon you are right. We have got to deal with this slavery question, and got to give much more attention to it hereafter than we have been doing."

His main effort in the Eastern States had been to recall the anti-slavery Whigs, who had joined the Free-Soil Party, to their old allegiance. He argued with them, as with the Liberty-men of 1844, that the orthodox Whigs were far more effectively opposing the extension of slave territory than were they. But, strong party man though he remained, he must have been impressed by the earnest moral sentiment of the Free-Soilers as opposed to the mere party loyalty which now characterised the Whigs.

On his return alone to Washington for the re-opening of Congress in December 1848, he availed himself of many opportunities to support the principle of the famous Wilmot proviso, which insisted that slavery should not be extended into the territories acquired from Mexico. And for his own part he undertook to attempt its removal from the National Capital.

This he set about with characteristic shrewdness,

both in drawing the terms of the measure, and in winning for his scheme the support of representative men of the slavery and abolition parties. On January 16th, 1849, he introduced his bill as an amendment to another which had proposed more summary prohibition. But in spite of his efforts and of the apparently practicable character of the compromise, the domineering attitude of the slavery men prevented its passing into law. Thus his first effort to "deal with" what he had now come to recognise as the great national problem, ended in disappointment.

Of his social life in Washington we know little. He was a favourite among his fellow-boarders and loved to join them through the summer evenings in the bowling alley. His inexhaustible stories were well known wherever Congress-men assembled: and were sometimes heard at the breakfasts given by the great Whig orator, Daniel Webster.<sup>1</sup>

Personal contact with political leaders such as that with Webster, was by no means the least important part of Lincoln's experience in Washington. Old John Quincy Adams, formerly a member of Monroe's cabinet, the predecessor of Jackson in the Presidency, and the dauntless champion in the House of the right of petition—that is to say of petition against slavery—died in the capital during Lincoln's first session. Among other members of this Congress were Andrew Johnson, Simon Cameron, Caleb Smith, Hannibal Hamlin, and Jefferson Davis, with all of whom Lincoln was afterwards to have important political relations,

<sup>1</sup> That friendly relations existed between Webster and Lincoln may also be inferred from the employment of the latter on a case involving Webster's title to certain property in Illinois.

while Stephen Douglas at this time, made his first appearance in the Senate.

As for the impression Lincoln made upon his new associates, we know little except that he impressed Senator Crittenden of Kentucky as a rising man. But his quaint simplicity and unconsciousness of outward eccentricities must often have attracted notice, as for example, when he carried home the books he had borrowed from the Library of the Supreme Court tied in a red handkerchief and slung across his shoulder. It was, however, his originality, his genuine unaffected difference from other men, which most impressed those who came into contact with him at this time. They understood that, whatever he might become, he was already a man of character.

Early in April, 1849, his sojourn in the Capital as member of the 30th Congress, came to an end. Almost the last ceremony he attended was the brilliant ball given to celebrate the inauguration of bluff old General Taylor, for whose election he had worked so assiduously. Then he withdrew once more into private life.<sup>1</sup>

But Congress-man Lincoln had deserved sufficiently well of his party to be offered a post under the new administration. He was at first attracted by the Secretaryship of Oregon, but found his wife resolved against going into the wilds. With good sense he

<sup>1</sup> On one of his return journeys from Washington, Lincoln visited Niagara. Like every other traveller, he was impressed by that stupendous spectacle. But his comment is extraordinarily characteristic of the man; it betrays no more direct susceptibility to natural grandeur, than does Walt Whitman's record of his own visit to the same scene in 1848. Lincoln said afterwards: "the thing that struck me most forcibly when I saw the Falls, was, where in the world did all that water come from?"

put aside the second suggestion of his friends that he should ask for a first-class foreign embassy, feeling that he was entirely unfitted for such a post. And when he applied for the Commissionership of the General Land Office, he was so scrupulously loyal to the opposing claims of his friends that he can hardly have been much surprised at his failure. One cannot help feeling that, in spite of this appearance in their ranks, Lincoln could never have belonged to the class of Office-seekers. He disliked them and their methods so much that, in later years, he came to regard them, and the spirit out of which they were begotten, as the most serious menace to the future of the Republic.

Yet he must have been disappointed by his failure. Could he have remained in Washington he would have been present during the storm and strife of the thirty-first Congress, perhaps the most pregnant in American history. He would have been in the midst of that struggle of the Titans which issued in Clay's last great work, the Compromise of 1850: he would have heard the clashing voices of union and disunion, —and of the great protagonists of the time in their hour of crisis: Calhoun calling up immediate war in the name of the South, Webster for the sake of Union, turning his back upon the cause of abolition, Governor Seward proclaiming a higher law than that even of the Constitution, while the old President in the background was growling out his determination to deal justice to traitors: and above all, central among them all, the pathetic, eloquent, fiery figure of Clay, forgetful of every minor consideration, pouring all the talents of his extraordinary personality and influence into the cause of National Unity.

Those were the great days in Washington, the end of a generation of heroic men, the last of Webster and Calhoun, of Taylor and of Clay, days in which Douglas shared, while Lincoln was carrying their burden with him in exile along the country roads of the Eighth Illinois Circuit. Politically, he seemed, indeed, to himself and to others, a ruined man. He had fallen back into a provincial mediocrity. But events proved how false such seeming was. He had only been withdrawn into the background that he might prepare for his part in the struggle with slavery and secession which was growing every year more inevitable.

His public utterances are sufficient evidence that he was not yet come into the full mastery of himself. Even at forty, the conflicting elements of his nature were not yet properly blended,—he was still, as it were, immature. And this, because he was a man of a profound emotional nature as well as of great intellectual gifts and pure moral quality. As yet, though he seemed so much immersed in politics, in the law, and in the round of Bohemian sociability, he remained, as it were, an onlooker at life. The man himself had not yet met with his occasion. Destiny had not yet demanded of him all he had to give—yea, to the uttermost farthing. And being one of those men who have the instinct of Destiny, he waited his hour.



## Chapter V

# On the Eighth Circuit

Lincoln and Herndon—Lincoln on Circuit—As a Lawyer—Important Cases—View of the Law—Appearance and Habits—Father dies—Eulogy on Clay—Douglas's position.

AFTER a flying visit to Washington in the summer of 1849, Lincoln settled down again to his old round of duties at Springfield, steadied by political disappointment. Here he was frequently consulted as to the filling of offices in his district, and was characteristically candid in his replies. Many a politician would have been content to urge the claims of his own friends on the attention of the Administration; but Lincoln had a scrupulous sense of responsibility, and a single desire to serve the public good. His fairness of spirit is humourously illustrated by the following, from a letter to the Secretary of State :

“ Mr Bond, I know to be, personally, every way worthy of the office [in question]; and he is very numerously and most respectably recommended. His papers I send to you : and I solicit for his claims a full and fair consideration. Having said this much, I add that, in my individual judgment, the appointment of Mr Thomas would be better.”

By mid-July he had apparently abandoned politics and become once more immersed in the law. On his return from Washington he had been offered a

partnership in a Chicago law-firm, but had declined on the ground that he had a tendency toward consumption, and feared the effect of a town-practice on his health.<sup>1</sup> His old partner, Herndon, had worked hard during his absence, and had extended their business: now, after nearly three years in which he had contributed nothing, Lincoln felt some compunction on taking up again his full share in the profits of their partnership. Herndon would, however, hear of nothing but resumption on the old terms.

In spite of the relentless logic of his thought, the senior partner was the least methodical of men in matters of detail, and his junior, in whom he had hoped to find balancing qualities, proved to be little better. Any order which could be discovered in the office must, therefore, have been due to the advent of some student-clerk who had taken chaos in hand, swept out the room and sorted the papers. The office was on the first floor of a brick-building which faced the court-house across the public-square, but it was a back room, and its windows overlooked the yard. Its furniture consisted of the baize-covered table, a few chairs, an old-fashioned "secretary" and a book-case containing a couple of hundred law-books.

Lincoln's real desk, in whose drawers and pigeon-holes, so to speak, all his more important notes and memoranda were deposited, was a tall silk hat. This figures in his business papers, for he writes, somewhat unprofessionally, to a fellow-lawyer, whose correspondence he had neglected, "when I received the letter, I put it in my old hat, and buying a new one

<sup>1</sup> This fear of consumption lends some colour to the report that his mother had died from the disease.

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the next day, the old one was set aside, and so the letter was lost sight of for a time.”<sup>1</sup> On top of the secretary lay a bundle of papers, always growing in bulk, and labelled “When you can’t find *it* anywhere else look into this.” One can almost see the twinkle of fun in his eye whenever he turned to ransack this package of his waifs and strays.

Lincoln was now living in his own modest house, to which, during one of his long absences with the Court, his wife is said to have added a story, thus altering it almost out of its owner’s recognition on his return. Nearly six months of every twelve he spent riding the Eighth Circuit with Judge Davis, only coming home when the round was completed. He was the only lawyer of the bar who took the whole circuit, and was thus the Judge’s constant companion. Davis and Lincoln were strongly contrasted in person and character, the former being stout, domineering, and somewhat avaricious. But he grew to be much attached to Lincoln, who became the leader of the bar on his circuit, and even on rare occasions, by consent of the court, acted as the Judge’s deputy in his absence. This position of favour would have been dangerous to any other man ; but Lincoln was never puffed-up to presume upon his position. He was modest and unassuming among his equals ; while to the youngest junior on the circuit he was uniformly kind, often deliberately effacing himself in order to give such an one his opportunity. It is said of him, that he never

<sup>1</sup> In another business letter of earlier date, quite too racy to be wholly omitted, he advised a client :

“As to the real estate, we cannot attend to it. . . We recommend you to give the charge of it to Mr Isaac Britton, a trustworthy man, and *one whom the Lord made on purpose for such business.*”

made an enemy in his profession. He was less frequently at home than his companions, who put this down to the fact that his married life was full of difficulties, due partly to his wife's irritable temper, but partly to his own inability to adjust his habits to domestic requirements. Devoted as he was to his boys, Lincoln was a real Bohemian, far more at home in the country taverns where he was so welcome a guest, than under his own roof.

Twice a year, in spring and early autumn, the judge accompanied by his band of lawyers, would set forth from Springfield, to visit the fifteen county seats of the circuit. Till 1854, there was no railway in that great prairie country reaching for 140 miles to the North-East almost as far as Chicago, and nearly as far to the East where it touched the Indiana border, including the district about Charleston where old Thomas Lincoln and John Johnston, his step-son, were still living. The inns which his worship patronised were the best that offered, but they boasted no refinements. The dignitaries of the Court slept two in a hard bed, and sometimes eight in a room, several occupying the floor. Their ill-cooked meals were shared by labourers and pedlars, and even, on occasion, by the prisoner himself. All this was mightily to Lincoln's taste, and more to his mind than the genteel or brilliant society at his wife's table.

When the Court arrived at a county-seat, a round of social functions would commence in all the larger houses. Accounts vary as to the part which Lincoln took in these; he was shy even to dumbness with ladies, and seems to have preferred the homelier doings of mine host and his guests. News travelled slowly

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over the vast thinly-peopled Western lands in the days before the telegraph, and newspapers were still scarce. It was in the inn-yard, parlours and porch that the townspeople gathered, especially on Sundays, to hear the news and gossip of the State when the Court visited them ; and above all to hear political polemics.

On this field no one could excel Lincoln ; no arguments or discussions were so interesting as his, and especially, no stories were ever greeted with more uproarious and uncontrollable mirth. This may not commend itself as the most orderly or profitable way of spending Sundays : indeed, for any smaller man such a life as this might have ended in mere " playing to the gallery." But in explanation of Lincoln's practice may be quoted the social habit of the times ; and the fact, that it was in this way his nature found its own relaxation.

Be it remembered too that his was not merely funny talk. His stories were by no means sheer nonsense. Whatever he said was apt to take the form of anecdote, and often what he said was of the profoundest import. Thus his stories, which rarely lacked their spice of humour, were often pregnant with political or social morality, and pointed by deep insight and acute observation. They were never mere witticisms. Lincoln was not a wit. He was essentially a poet, a man of pathos and of humour, practising his art in a peculiar *milieu* it is true, but a man of a class as far as possible from that of the wit.

There is besides another picture of Lincoln which may help us to further understanding. We see him sitting late in the tavern entertaining the judge and the

others with his irresistible talk, till the last vestige of the dignity of the bench is abandoned in convulsions of merriment. But when His Worship and the rest are all asleep, we see him wrestling, like any school-boy, with the Elements of Euclid, or with German, till long past midnight.

Sometimes, when the Court was entertaining itself sumptuously at a high social function, he would slip away in solitude and join a party of children at some humble magic-lantern show, or attend their examinations in order that, as an onlooker, he might a little remedy the defects of his own education.

The tragic element in his nature occasionally betrayed itself to some companion. Early one morning, for example, Mr Whitney, who was sharing the same room, woke to find Lincoln sitting up in bed "talking the wildest and most incoherent madness" to himself. Presently he sprang up, dressed, and sat gloomily over the fire. When the breakfast bell sounded, he started, and then very dejectedly joined the others at table.

But if he loved the Bohemian *camaraderie* of the country tavern—where he was perhaps the only member of the Court who left the ubiquitous whisky-jug untasted—the Court-house was the field whereon he won his more enduring fame. Even from this it was impossible to exclude his overflowing drollery. He would whisper his stories in Court till the judge called him, half-sternly, half-despairingly, to order; taking, however, the first opportunity to learn the cause of the merriment he had interrupted.

And in more legitimate ways his humour also displayed itself, standing him in good stead with the jury. He was engaged in many minor cases involving



no serious moral issue, and in these he would take a freakish delight in displaying his power of persuasion. No one could guess what form it would assume. Once, for instance, he is said to have won a verdict rebutting a charge of trespass, by the mere inimitable description of the perplexity of the wandering hog which found the plaintiff's fence so inexplicably crooked that it invariably came through again upon its own side.

If his conscience allowed him, and he was in good form, he could almost always demolish his opponent's case by his power of homely ridicule. Many of his companions at the bar, naturally regarded this and similar qualities with strong disfavour. A recent writer<sup>1</sup> has said, he "probably laughed more jury cases out of court than any other man": and certainly, at this distance, some of his methods in addressing the jury strike one as the reverse of professional. We can well understand the resentment of a stately opponent who lost his case—which by the way was a bad one—owing to Lincoln's shrewdness in pointing out to the jury that his learned friend had put his fine shirt on the wrong way round. With Lincoln such tricks seem to have been justified, because, if we may believe those who report them, they were always well-advised. It would be obviously absurd to criticise him according to the standards of decorum in an English Court, where he could not have displayed his peculiar qualities to advantage.

Again, he can hardly have been said to have "addressed the gentlemen of the jury," rather, he simply talked to them, describing the situation in terms so clear and familiar that it was impossible for

<sup>1</sup> F. T. Hill.

them not to understand. He was even, perhaps, a little ostentatious in his ignorance of Latin words and of all such phrases as he knew were "Greek" to the common juror. Not himself a demagogue, he could employ the arts of the demagogue when he required them.

So much for the lighter side of Lincoln at the bar. Before speaking of his more serious work, it may be well to refer to another and much rarer aspect of the man. He was not all, and only, good nature. There were hours when he was terrible. If his indignation was thoroughly aroused, as it was sometimes, this genial, simple-seeming, kindly man could be the worst of enemies whether to an unjust judge, a dishonest lawyer trying to make out a bad case by deceit and ingenuity, or to a guilty man whose conviction he deemed it necessary to obtain.

Here are his notes for an argument against a government agent who had retained half the pension of a poor woman, the widow of a revolutionary soldier :

"No contract. — Not professional services. — Unreasonable charge. — Money detained by Def't, not given by Pl'ff. — Revolutionary War. — Describe Valley Forge privations. — Ice. — Soldier's bleeding feet. — Pl'ff's husband. — Soldier leaving home for army. — *Skin Def't.* — Close."

While these rare outbursts of righteous wrath and the daily exhibitions of his humour remained in men's memories, the reputation he acquired as a powerful advocate and shrewd lawyer rested upon surer foundations. His greatest power lay doubtless in his absolute and extraordinarily convincing candour. He would frankly admit, and even state over again more clearly

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than the opposing counsel, the facts that were against him, in order to rebut them. Where he was himself convinced by them, he deliberately abandoned his case.

It is said that on one occasion, when the opposing lawyer had closed a sophistical address in a blustering vein, Lincoln quietly retorted with the story of a somewhat irreligious person, lost in a thunderstorm, who at last fell down on his knees, exclaiming, "O Lord, if it is all the same to You, give us a little more light and a little less noise." It is an admirable illustration both of his method and of his attitude to his profession.

He was never, in the narrower sense of the word, a mere advocate. In the fullest meaning of the American phrase, he felt that he was "trying the case." He was not a special pleader setting forth a one-sided view, or making an adroit argument which depended for its success on the prejudices or ignorance of the jury. He was first and always interested in the doing of justice. He was determined that as far as it was in his power, the judge and jury should face the real issue, see it clear of technical lumber, and decide upon it in the broadest and most human spirit. And he knew, as perhaps no other lawyer in the court could know, how to handle his materials in order to bring about the desired result. It has been said, doubtless with something of the hyperbole of panegyric, that Lincoln was never known to fail in a case where "he ought to have been successful." It is at least certain that in no other case could success have given him satisfaction.

Not only did he tell the truth himself, but he exacted and obtained it from the witnesses he examined ; not

by brow-beating, but by an engaging courtesy and kindness combined with consummate ability in the art of cross-examination, and also by moral power. If, like George Washington in the story, he could not tell a lie, it was surprisingly difficult for anyone else to tell a lie to him. Not only did he possess that indefinable personal charm which every one felt in his presence, but he seemed actually to read the truth in a man's heart, and compel him to utter it. He had the disconcerting power of asking the right question.

Although the great majority of his cases turned upon what one regards as minor matters, the adjustment of property disputes, of claims for trespass, slander, petty felony, personal assault, and so forth, such as would naturally provide material for a nomadic practice in a new country, yet in the twenty-four broken years of his legal work, Lincoln had a number of more difficult cases which made a greater claim upon his powers of analysis and exposition. And now that he had practically withdrawn from politics, he was able to give himself to such tasks as these, and to win, even among his rivals, a reputation for ability probably second to none in his State. So much has been spoken in the manner of panegyric upon this matter, that the mere truth is difficult to ascertain. It may, indeed, be surmised that Lincoln's legal talents were never fully employed until he began to argue the greatest of constitutional cases before the whole American public in his debates with Douglas, or later still in his messages to Congress. These have long since placed him in the first rank of lawyer-statesmen.

His legal position at the Illinois bar is, however,

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suggested by several facts and incidents. In 1848, the year of his first visit to Washington, he had a case in the United States Supreme Court; and during the years of his practice in Illinois, he had 172 cases in the Supreme Court of that State. This is said to compare favourably with the practice of any of his distinguished fellow-lawyers on the circuit.<sup>1</sup> In 1855, he was employed by the Illinois Central Railroad Company in an important case, which he won for them. On presenting his account he was brusquely informed that its charges were preposterous, as much indeed as Daniel Webster himself would have asked. Now Lincoln's charges were never excessive—it was the common complaint of his colleagues that they were absurdly low—and on consultation with his friends he sued the Company for double the amount, and obtained it. It is estimated that at the present time his services would be valued at twenty times the amount. In another important case, that of the M'Cormick patents tried at Cincinnati in the neighbouring State of Ohio, during the same year, he was retained, but to his great disappointment was not allowed to plead, the case being conducted by Mr Stanton, afterwards his Secretary of War. On this occasion he is said to have been deeply humiliated by what he felt to be his own lack of legal erudition when compared with that of Mr Stanton.<sup>2</sup> Two years later he was engaged on another important case affecting the right to bridge the Mississippi River.

These engagements indicate the confidence placed by the greatest industrial interests of the State in his ability to expound large and complex mathematical

<sup>1</sup> See F. T. Hill, *Lincoln the Lawyer*.

<sup>2</sup> It was on this occasion that Stanton described him as "that giraffe."

and mechanical problems: his success in them arose from his power of linking his technical argument with the broad human and national issues involved. Doubtless he enjoyed these large exercises in logic, in which he met opponents worthy of him, almost as keenly as the more human cases, in which, while his argument was logically and clearly made, he relied upon other aids than cold reason.

I have spoken of the smallness of his fees. The truth is that not only was his standard for payment that of a poor man, but he regarded his ability and calling as a sacred trust held by him for the benefit of society. He considered himself bound, as much as any doctor or clergyman, to succour those in need, even without remuneration. The most celebrated of his great criminal defences was one undertaken out of affection, and won without other fee than that of gratitude. It was the defence of a son of his old Clary Grove friend and foe, Jack Armstrong, who was under trial for murder.

This case was tried in 1858, the year of his great contest with Douglas. Lincoln, having offered to aid in the defence, and having used his influence to obtain a jury of young men who would be likeliest to understand the situation, appealed strongly to them upon broad human grounds. He was finally able to prove by the use of an almanac that some of the most important evidence upon which he had taken care that attention should be focussed, and which depended upon the state of the moon at the time of the murder, was upon that account false. The impression thus made on the jury was so great that they acquitted the accused.

In another murder case tried in the following year,



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Lincoln again obtained a verdict of not guilty by characteristic means. He drew from the grandfather of the victim a pathetic recital of the young man's dying words, "I want you to say to my slayer that I forgive him"; and he succeeded in bringing the jury to concur in that noble utterance. The death penalty was always abhorrent to Lincoln, and that must have been a singularly hardened murderer on whose behalf he would not use every possible effort to prevent its being enforced. Such incidents as these, while affording material for criticism, serve to indicate the spirit in which he did his work during these years.

At the beginning of this period, about 1850, he had written out some notes for a lecture on the Law, in which, after urging the necessity for diligence, and acknowledging his own deficiencies, he wrote :

"Discourage litigation. . . . As a peace-maker, the lawyer has a superior opportunity of being a good man. . . . Never stir up litigation. A worse man can scarcely be found than one who does this. Who can be more nearly a fiend than he who habitually overhauls the register of deeds in search of defects in titles, whereon to stir up strife and put money in his pocket? A moral tone ought to be infused into the profession which should drive such men out of it. . . . An exorbitant fee should never be claimed."

And again :

"There is a vague popular belief that lawyers are necessarily dishonest. . . . Let no young man, choosing the law for a calling, for a moment yield to the popular belief. Resolve to be honest at all events; and if in your own judgment you cannot be an honest lawyer, resolve to be honest without being a lawyer."

Those words indicate his supreme strength in his profession. Some writers have attempted to prove that one of his greatest cases was won by a deliberate fraud. Even if this assertion had not been shown to be false, it would be palpably absurd. Lincoln, as I have said before, had not the power to be successfully dishonest. Candour was his first and most essential quality ; it shone out of his face.

In Court as elsewhere, he was as original and unconventional in appearance as it is possible to conceive. Mr Whitney has described his first meeting with Lincoln, which took place in the autumn of 1854. " He had the appearance of a rough, intelligent farmer, and his rude home-made buggy and raw-boned horse enforced this view. On the way to the station he played all the time on a boy's harp."

" His face," continues Mr Whitney, " was the most mobile I ever saw. I have seen him betraying a silly and inane expression ; also while animated by the most overflowing spirit of fun and mischief ; likewise, when feeling profound contempt, armed with the most cruelly quizzical expression ; and anon, in seasons of the visitation of that awful, mysterious melancholy, with a face as inexpressibly sad, much sadder than that of Dante or Saint Francis of Assisi."

In social life, says the same writer, he was " the most simple, guileless and unsophisticated man that it was possible to be." He is described by his partner, Herndon, as very simple in his habits : his hat, brown with age, and almost napless ; his clothes unbrushed and hanging loosely, his trousers too short ; a scant circular cloak or a shawl over his shoulders. In one hand he usually carried a faded green umbrella with

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"A. Lincoln" in large white letters sewed inside it. The knob was gone, and it was tied in the middle with a bit of string. In the other hand was a carpet bag, his sole personal luggage.

This was on circuit. In Springfield he was the same: he lodged at home, but lived at the office, usually lunching there on cheese and biscuits.

At home, among the approved nick-nacks, he seems to have felt himself so much out of place that he sought comfort on the floor, where he would lie in his shirt sleeves reading; jumping up and going to the door as he was, to admit callers. Till he actually did become President his ambitious little wife must often have despaired of him. All this singularity, was not merely careless or eccentric; it was the natural result of a unique personality, frankly, even boyishly, sincere. Nor did the odd rustic garb, belong to a man who was indifferent as to his habits. He was always carefully shaved and scrupulously clean: while, as Mr Whitney remarks, there was "nothing unpleasant, physically or morally," in personal intercourse with him.

In the office, when the two partners were alone, Lincoln would interrupt work by reading the newspapers aloud and discussing everything under the sun. As his boys grew old enough to be a source of annoyance to serious people, working havoc in the office, they became Lincoln's amusement and delight. He was a very indulgent father, and when he was at home the boys were sure of a good time. He had much leisure too—leisure for long games of chess; he had time to stop and talk, to note everything that was going on, and to share in everyone's business and interests. Wherever citizens met for talk, he would

be found, either in the morning or the evening. And halfway through the afternoon, he would go home to do the chores about his cowhouse and stable, and chop fire-wood.

To say the least, whatever his hours, he could hardly, in those years, be described as a busy man. His mind needed space. He had much time for thought and for desultory reading. Often he might be met wandering through the unfrequented streets absolutely immersed and abstracted in some problem. He had three different moods which his familiars came to know and respect ; one of strenuous concentration on his task, a second of black unapproachable melancholy, and the third of sheer irresponsibility.

Withal, there was about the man an undefinable distinction, entirely his own ; a quality which at certain moments revealed itself as almost prophetic in its intensity and depth of conviction, and which at all times singled him out amongst the others, as though for some purpose, hidden as yet alike from him and from them.

Such was Lincoln, man and lawyer, on the Eighth Circuit in Illinois ; and such was the field upon which he proved his quality, and was trained for his great work.

Meanwhile, during these years, he had had family troubles. The death of his second son was followed, early in 1851, by that of his father. One of the most interesting of his letters at this time is that written in January to his step-brother, Johnston, on the prospect of the old man's death, which occurred a few days later. Lincoln was unable to visit him, owing to pressure of affairs, and to his own wife's illness. He

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even suggests in his letter that perhaps he would not in any case have come ; the meeting now might be too painful. And then he adds words that we cannot doubt are honest, but words that come singularly from one who was so recently accredited with atheism. "Tell him to remember to call upon and confide in our great and good and merciful Maker, who will not turn away from him in any extremity. . . . Say to him that . . . he will soon have a joyous meeting with many loved ones gone before, and where the rest of us, through the help of God, hope ere long to join them." Explain it as we may, this passage indicates that Lincoln had himself, in his own extremity, made use of that support of prayer which now he proffered to another in like need ; and that he who had lost so much through death had come at length to the conviction of personal immortality.

For Lincoln, with his intense emotional life and his profound social consciousness, rationalism could not be finally satisfying. His keen critical sense kept him away from the creeds, and his feeling for humour and for democracy left him hostile to the methods of the pulpit. But a spirit like his could not remain permanently unconscious of its relation to the Invisible World or to the Heart of Humanity. With the increasing passion of his own fatherhood there seems to have come to him an ever deeper sense of the dependence of man, in every great crisis, upon a Power worthy of his trust.

He continued to watch over the interests of his step-mother, standing between them and the shiftless schemes and devices of her own son. It is singular to note how Abraham Lincoln resembled this woman

rather than his father, while her own son, John Johnston, had many of the old carpenter's characteristics.

The relations between the step-brothers are interesting. In answer to John's appeals for money, Lincoln, with an insight that surely came in part from a sort of recollected fellow-feeling, wrote kindly but candidly: "You are not lazy, and still you are an idler. . . . You do not very much dislike to work, and still you do not work much, merely because it does not seem to you that you could get much for it." In order to remedy this congenital defect, with which Lincoln really sympathised, though he could not excuse it, he offered to give Johnston a dollar for every dollar earned by his own labour within the next five months. Probably the fellow had been attracted by the promise of gold in California, as he was, soon after, by other hopes in Missouri; but Lincoln urged him to remain upon his own holding. "Squirring and crawling about from place to place can do no good. . . . *Go to work* is the only cure for your case." He had to argue a long time before he could dissuade his brother from selling off the farm, and thus defrauding his widowed mother of the small source of income still left to her.

It was probably about this time that Lincoln succeeded in paying off the last instalment of his New Salem debt. He was now earning perhaps four or five hundred pounds a year, and until he went to Washington in 1861 his average income can hardly have exceeded this amount. It was sufficient for his needs, though its limits hampered any large devotion of his time to political objects. He was anxious that his sons should be well educated, and that his wife



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should be comfortable; but, while securing independence, he never seems to have had any desire, even if he had had the capacity, to accumulate riches.<sup>1</sup>

In July 1852—three years after he had apparently abandoned political life—Lincoln delivered his eulogy on Henry Clay in the Springfield State House. Whatever his failings, Clay had stood for thirty years the great representative of American unity, and his death was a blow to the Union. For as Lincoln well said, “the spell—the long-enduring spell—with which the souls of men were bound to him is a miracle.” That spell, as we have seen, bound men not only to Henry Clay but to the cause of the Union; and to that because it represented the cause of human liberty. As Lincoln finely said, “he desired the prosperity of his countrymen, partly because they were his countrymen, but chiefly to show to the world that free men could be prosperous.”

The orator traced the story of Clay's great national efforts, dwelling especially on his struggle with “that unfortunate source of discord—negro slavery,”—a struggle which issued in the Missouri Compromise of 1819. That Compromise closed the first great crisis caused by civil strife in the story of the Union—a crisis which, as Lincoln reminded his hearers, had called forth a pregnant saying from old Thomas Jefferson: “we have the wolf by the ears, and we can neither hold him, nor safely let him go.”

The most significant part of his oration dealt specifically with Clay's own attitude towards the problem

<sup>1</sup> At the time of his leaving Springfield, he is said, however, to have accumulated some \$8000 (£1600), owing probably to his wife's good management.

of slavery. Lincoln extolled the Kentucky statesman's devotion to gradual emancipation, declaring it to be the one practical remedy consonant with the cause of human liberty as a whole. He upheld the position of Clay as against that of the Abolitionists on the one hand, and of those—a few but an increasing number—on the other, who sought to perpetuate slavery, and were beginning to assail the “white man's charter of freedom, the declaration that all men are created free and equal.” And he quoted that great passage, from a speech made by Clay in 1827 before the American Colonisation Society, in which he had declared that those who opposed the work of the Society, “must go back to the era of our liberty and independence, and muzzle the cannon which thunders its annual joyous return. . . . They must blow out the moral light around us and extinguish that greatest torch of all which America presents to a benighted world—pointing the way to their rights, their liberties and their happiness. And when they have achieved all those purposes their work will be yet incomplete. They must penetrate the human soul, and eradicate the light of reason and the love of liberty. Then, and not till then, when universal darkness and despair prevail, can you perpetuate slavery and repress all sympathy and all humane and benevolent efforts among free men in behalf of the unhappy portion of our race doomed to bondage.”

Lincoln himself hoped that by gradual emancipation and the transportation of free negroes to Africa, the problem of slavery would be solved, to the incalculable blessing of both races.

The oration has somewhere been described as

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merely formal and complimentary: on the contrary, it contains much of the material afterwards repeatedly used by Lincoln with effect in the struggle with slavery. And it showed the attention he was now giving to the history of America.

Again, the note on which it closed is significant of the new and more serious attitude he was taking towards the great issues which were gradually becoming clear. "Henry Clay is dead. . . Such a man the times have demanded, and such in the providence of God was given us. But he is gone. Let us strive to deserve, as far as mortals may, the continued care of Divine Providence, trusting that in future national emergencies He will not fail to provide us the instruments of safety and security."

Clay's death was rapidly followed by that of the Whig party. The actual disaster came at the polls in 1852, when the Democrats swept the country, carrying all the States but four. Lincoln appears to have made some perfunctory speeches on behalf of General Scott, but Herndon says that they were marked rather by jealousy of Douglas—who was now a national figure—than by any qualities really characteristic of the man.

Whether this be so or not we are not in a position to judge.<sup>1</sup> But it seems clear that Lincoln was by

<sup>1</sup> The following is an extract from one of his speeches in this canvass: "Let us stand by our candidate as faithfully as he has always stood by our country. I much doubt if we do not perceive a slight abatement of Judge Douglas's confidence in Providence as well as the people. I suspect that confidence is not more firmly fixed with the judge than it was with the old woman whose horse ran away with her in a buggy. She said she 'trusted in Providence till the britchin' broke,' and then she 'didn't know what on airth to do.'"

this time thoroughly dissatisfied with the position of mere compromise to which the Whigs were holding. Herndon had been an out-and-out Abolitionist from his youth up, and probably his report of his partner's sayings maybe somewhat biassed. But from 1850 on, he asserts that Lincoln had made up his mind that the slavery question could no longer be successfully compromised: indeed, we may perhaps trace this conviction back to 1848 and the visit to New England.

It was in 1852 that Douglas became for the first time a national figure. His friends were determined to gratify his ambition and make him President. For this end they had bought a well-known monthly organ called *The Democratic Review*. Its columns were now filled with violent attacks upon such older men as were most spoken of for the presidential nomination, the whole enterprise being characterised rather by bluster than by tact. Douglas succeeded in ruining his rival's prospects, but he failed in obtaining the prize, which went to Franklin Pierce, a "northern politician with southern principles" who became the pliant tool of the slavery party.

Though defeated, Douglas had attained a remarkable position. Coming west to Illinois when he was just twenty, he became a judge of the supreme court of that State some eight years later. After two more years he was sent to Washington as a member of Congress, and at thirty-three received the coveted honour of election to the Senate. About this time he married a Southern lady, whose father owned slaves, and himself became a man of fortune through his investments in Chicago lands. His personal appear-

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ance was very striking. Lincoln had once described him as "the least man I ever saw"; but this dwarfish body was crowned by a head, large out of all proportion, and he seemed the very ideal of the vital force and intellectual dominance of the West. On his first appearance in Washington indeed, he struck Eastern statesmen unpleasantly. Old John Quincy Adams had then described him as raving and roaring with the air and aspect of a half-naked pugilist; but he soon adapted himself to his new environment, and became in time one of the centres of Washington Society. He modelled his manners upon those of Clay, whom he greatly admired, and in some respects resembled. He had much of the great Kentuckian's personal charm, magnetism, and real generosity; and became the idol of the younger Northern Democrats, the "representative of Young America," and especially of that energy which created Chicago. Never a real student, he relied upon a ready mind and immediate intuition in every emergency; for the rest he trusted to his fine melodious voice, his power of personal dominance, and his knowledge of men, won in the same school as Lincoln's, and his past successes, to assure his triumph.

He was not yet forty years of age, but he could claim that it was largely through his influence that Clay's last supreme effort for compromise—that of 1850—had passed the Senate. He had proclaimed himself in some sort the champion not only of it, but of the Missouri Compromise, a measure he had described as being "canonised in the hearts of the American people as a sacred thing."

In spite of Douglas's rhetoric, there was a section

of the slavery party which openly denounced this sacred Compromise as unconstitutional, since it interfered with the freedom of citizens to carry their slave-property into the Territories north of a prescribed latitude. Another section was proposing to substitute for the final settlement which it had seemed to provide, a new principle, plausibly described as "popular sovereignty." By this, every unsettled Territory—whose destiny had hitherto been controlled by the Missouri Compromise which had prohibited slavery except in a particular section—would become the battle-ground of the slavery and anti-slavery parties, who would seek to control it before the hour came when its citizens should form their own constitution and decide for themselves whether the new State should come into the Union slave or free.

It was in January, 1854, that Douglas, then Chairman of the Senate Committee on Territories, accepted this last-named principle, applying it, in his revised Kansas-Nebraska Bill, to the great district west of Missouri.

With his adoption of "popular Sovereignty," there begins a new movement in American politics, and a new chapter in the life of Abraham Lincoln.



## Chapter VI

# The Challenge

Douglas's Nostrum—Lincoln's Opposition—Speech at Peoria—A Truce  
—Lincoln misses the Senatorship—Letters on Slavery—Rise of  
Republicanism—Speech at Bloomington—Election of 1856.

IF the Presidential nomination of 1852 offered Douglas the opportunity of attaining national eminence, Douglas's Nebraska Bill was the opportunity of Lincoln. 1854 was a year of Congressional elections, and from January onwards, but especially from the passage of the Bill at the end of May till far into the succeeding autumn, the country was filled with a continually increasing clamour of debate, which seemed to reach its climax in September when Douglas came West, to defend his policy before his constituents.

The political apathy of recent years had been suddenly swept away, and men, though still hesitating to break their old party ties, were being inevitably drawn to take sides for or against the Nebraska Bill. Henceforward, until it was settled, there could only be one issue—that of the Extension of Slavery. For Douglas and his fellow-senators had attacked the whole Constitutional theory, that slavery, while it was an evil rendered necessary by past circumstances, was one which must be kept within a prescribed area and excluded from the rest of the national domain.

Douglas used to say, with the characteristic

speciousness of a false analogy, "God Almighty placed man on the earth and told him to choose between good and evil: that was the origin of the Nebraska Bill." Let us look into this statement a moment, and see what Douglas's Bill really meant. Popular sovereignty was the name with which Douglas replaced the title of "squatter sovereignty" given in derision by Calhoun to Cass's nostrum of 1847. This had been introduced by the latter, as an alternative to the proviso of Wilmot, for which Lincoln voted some forty times while a member of Congress. It had proposed that Congress might permit the people of any Territory to choose for themselves, whether they would admit or prohibit slavery. In the Compromise of 1850, which was an attempt to settle a specific quarrel between the two great parties, the difficulty of deciding whether the Territories of Utah and New Mexico—then formed out of the recent conquests from Mexico—had or had not already recognised the status of slavery, was evaded by leaving it to the people of those Territories to determine. No such doubt existed in the case of Nebraska, which was part of the area north of the Missouri line specifically declared by previous Compromises as free from any question on this issue. But when Douglas—who, since 1843, had been seeking to induce Congress to organise Nebraska as a Territory and thus to open it for settlement—perceived that he could accomplish his pet project by juggling adroitly for votes, both North and South, with "popular sovereignty," he erected this, which had hitherto been a mere piece of political expediency, into "a great principle" of universal application.

His espousal of this "principle" was not wholly disinterested. It was a bid for the leadership of his party, in which he was now the strongest personality, and especially for the Presidency. The manner in which he handled the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, and finally carried it through Congress, in spite of the most powerful opposition, and the suavity and mastery he exhibited in this great struggle, all bore witness to his personal pre-eminence. But he failed signally to achieve his purpose. If, as he asserted, he was the true successor of Henry Clay, he ought to have appeased and not exacerbated party strife: he ought never to have re-opened the most bitter of sectional controversies, a controversy which was, besides, destined for a generation to destroy the political power of his party.

It is only fair to Douglas to add that there is not evidence to prove that what he did, he did with the object of serving the interests of slavery. It is indeed quite possible that when the geographical limitation of future slave territory which had been effected by the Missouri Compromise, was infringed by the subsequent Compromise<sup>1</sup> of 1850, Douglas began, as he afterwards declared, to seek for a solution of the problem of slavery extension in the principle of popular sovereignty. One of his eulogists went so far as to say that Douglas had anticipated that no new slave Territory could ever be organised, North or South, under this principle.

Be that as it may, it seems clear that Douglas

<sup>1</sup> Rendered necessary by the refusal of Congress in 1848 to extend this line of limitation through the territories newly acquired from Mexico to the Pacific.

hoped, by its adoption, to withdraw the problem from the foreground of national politics, and make it a merely local conflict. And it is clear also that he acted throughout in accordance with his Democratic principles, heartily believing that the sound sense of any group of Americans might be trusted even upon the matter of slavery ; and that every intervention of Congress would hamper and weaken that self-reliance and independence upon which alone a democracy can subsist. In all this he represented a very large body of moderate men of common sense in the Northern, but especially in the Western States. And not a few of these were Whigs. For, as we have seen, Clay himself had left the door ajar to the new heresy, when, in his Compromise of 1850, he had proposed that, in certain portions of the territory recently taken from Mexico and lying north of the Missouri line, the decision as to free or slave State-hood should be made by the new citizens. This idea Douglas had seized upon and would now extend to all the Territories.

After what Lincoln had said in private as to the impossibility of compromising the question of slavery, it may sound paradoxical to add that he came back with renewed enthusiasm into politics in support of the old Missouri Compromise. But it must be remembered that this so-called Compromise seemed, in 1820, to have excluded the possibility of forming any new slave-states west of the Mississippi, save only Arkansas, while a later reading of it still left the whole of the great territory north of the line of  $36^{\circ}30'$  free beyond dispute. When this is remembered, it will be seen that in supporting that Compromise, Lincoln

was seeking to maintain the constitutional position that slavery was an evil, and must by strict geographical limitation, be put in the way of ultimate extinction. When, therefore, he came out against Douglas in the summer of 1854, he came out against the extension—that is to say the perpetuation—of slavery.

And it was against more than slavery. We have seen how Lincoln had long ago laid down the doctrine that the free institutions of America could only be perpetuated by the devotion of her citizens to the Constitution and to the spirit of her laws. Douglas was filling men's thoughts with something very different. With his logical but superficial mind, his easy popular eloquence, his incapacity either for profound thought or for the deeper moral convictions,—he was under-mining in the popular mind its almost mystical reverence for the Constitution, while pretending to re-interpret its spirit. And he was thus preparing the way not only for reaction, but for a national revolution wholly opposite in character to that of 1776.

Lincoln's important actions were usually the consequence of prolonged deliberation, and it was so with his return to political life. When news of Douglas's success in carrying his Bill through Congress reached Lincoln, then on circuit, he was deeply moved. All night long he sat meditating upon its significance ; and in the morning he declared to his companion, " I tell you, Dickey, this nation cannot exist half-slave and half-free." But he seems to have continued his usual round with Judge Davis in the spring of 1854, maturing the thoughts which were surging in his brain.

He was arguing out for himself the proper scope of government, how it must "do for the people what needs to be done, but which they cannot by individual effort do at all, or do so well, for themselves." And he was setting over against one another the industrial ideals of the northern and the southern States. At the North, as he knew it, a society of equals, sharing together the common burden of labour, "no permanent class of hired labourers," all improving their condition under the constant inspiration of hope. At the South—the hopeless condition of slavery.

"Equality in society alike beats inequality, whether the latter be of the British aristocratic sort or of the domestic slavery sort. We know Southern men declare that their slaves are better off than hired labourers amongst us. How little they know whereof they speak! There is no permanent class of hired labourers amongst us. Twenty-five years ago I was a hired labourer. The hired labourer of yesterday labours on his own account to-day, and will hire others to labour for him to-morrow. Advancement—improvement in condition—is the order of things in a society of equals. As labour is the common burden of our race, so the effort of some to shift their share of the burden on to the shoulders of others is the great durable curse of the race. Originally a curse for transgression upon the whole race, when, as by slavery, it is concentrated on a part only, it becomes the double-refined curse of God upon his creatures.

"Free labour has the inspiration of hope; pure slavery has no hope. The power of hope upon human exertion and happiness is wonderful. The slave-master himself has a conception of it, and hence the system



of tasks among slaves. The slave whom you cannot drive with the lash to break seventy-five pounds of hemp in a day, if you will task him to break a hundred, and promise him pay for all he does over, he will break you a hundred and fifty. You have substituted hope for the rod. And yet perhaps it does not occur to you that, to the extent of your gain in the case, you have given up the slave system and adopted the free system of labour."

Things have changed since Lincoln's day, and there is now in America, and especially in the Northern States a vast "permanent class of hired labourers," excluded, it would seem, forever from a society of equals. Lincoln did not foresee the industrial change that was coming. He believed that, in maintaining the individualistic industrial ideals of the North, he was maintaining the only practical social equality; while he saw clearly that the industrial system of the South struck at the very life of the Republic.<sup>1</sup>

When Douglas reached Chicago in September, he found his own city and the northern part of Illinois strongly hostile to him, while secessions, due to his action, had already begun from the ranks of the Democratic party in the Illinois legislature. But on the other hand, he rapidly won support from the Whigs in the middle and southern regions of the State, who regarded the opposition being offered to the new policy with the more disfavour because it was associated in their minds with bolting Democrats and Abolition

<sup>1</sup> Attempts to make Lincoln appear in the guise of a Socialist seem to be based upon a hypothetical letter "in the possession of a Maine physician," describing his fears for the future because of the power of "corporations" and great capitalists. This letter has never been produced. See W. J. Ghent in *Collier's Weekly*, 1st April, 1905.

extremists. It was therefore upon no ordinary occasion that Lincoln found himself pitted once more against his old adversary at the State Fair in Springfield on the 4th of October 1854. He had replied already to John Calhoun, his former chief and now Douglas's lieutenant, in the State Capital, but the present was a more notable effort and attracted wider attention.

Lincoln spoke for four hours with a new and unexpected power which seems to have astonished and disconcerted Douglas. His actual argument has not been preserved but it was doubtless similar to that of the speech at Peoria delivered twelve days later. Evidence of its success is to be found in the immediate attempt of the Springfield Abolitionists to capture Lincoln for their leader. Lincoln's object was to consolidate the Opposition to the Bill; and he only escaped by a ruse from the difficult position of having either to accept the Abolitionist overtures and so to alienate the great majority of the Anti-Nebraska men, who were conscientiously opposed to the methods of the abolition party;—or to refuse, and thus openly to break with a very powerful and growing section of Douglas's enemies, with whose principles he was as much in sympathy as he was opposed to their policy. By the time of the inconvenient meeting, he had slipped away to a country town where Judge Davis was holding Court.

He had once more measured swords with Douglas, and this time at the beginning of the great duel which was to continue with varying fortunes for six years.

Lincoln was forty-five. During the last months his friends had noticed an increased seriousness in him,

and a more frequent desire for solitude and thought. He had been reading more closely than was his wont, making himself familiar with the history of that long struggle with slavery which was now entering upon a new phase.

The increase in his general historical knowledge is suggested in the opening of his Peoria speech. Douglas had spoken for three hours, and there had followed a very necessary adjournment for supper. Then Lincoln replied. After a tribute to Jefferson, whom he described as "the author of the Declaration of Independence" and "the most distinguished politician of our history"—and an attempt to prove that old Democrat's opposition to the attitude now adopted by the party which professed so great devotion to him—Lincoln reviewed the events leading up to the Missouri Compromise, and those which had more recently issued in its repeal and in the Nebraska Act. He then proceeded to denounce that repeal in no unhesitating language :

"This declared indifference, but, as I must think, covert real zeal for the spread of slavery, I cannot but hate. I hate it because of the monstrous injustice of slavery itself. I hate it because it deprives our republican example of its just influence in the world . . . and especially because it forces so many good men among ourselves into an open war with the very fundamental principles of civil liberty, criticising the Declaration of Independence, and insisting that there is no right principle of action but self-interest."

Having said so much, he went on to explain that he was by no means blaming the Southern people for not abolishing slavery. If he himself had power, his

first impulse would be to liberate all the slaves and send them back to Africa ; but he recognised that any such effort, suddenly made, would be worse than impracticable. If we free the slaves, he continued, what are we to do with them ? Universal sentiment would prevent our regarding them as political and social equals. In view of so difficult a situation, who could condemn the Southern people for their tardiness of action ?

But while he would not condemn them for this, while he would support them in all their constitutional rights, he would admit no excuses when they attempted to extend the domain of slavery. To open the vast territory of Nebraska to slavery was a revolutionary act on a par with, and certain to be followed by, the renewal of the African slave-trade.

Lincoln then spoke of the moral impossibility of regarding the negro as mere property, and the fallacy of arguing, as did the supporters of the Nebraska Bill, that, as to absolute liberty of action, there should be no differentiation between the owner of slaves and the owner of hogs. Upon this followed his scathing exposure of Douglas's nostrum. "Popular sovereignty," as the school of Douglas used the phrase, did not mean self-government :

"The doctrine of self-government is right—absolutely, eternally right, . . . but if the negro is a man, is it not to that extent a total destruction of self-government to say that he too shall not govern himself ? When the white man governs himself that is self-government ; but when he governs himself and also governs another man, that is more than self-government—that is despotism. . . . No man is good

enough to govern another man without that other's consent. I say this is the leading principle, the sheet-anchor, of American republicanism."

But this, though it was the most glaring, was not the only flaw in Douglas's panacea. Lincoln pointed out that the unsettled Territories were held in national trust, not merely for the first few thousand settlers who might enter them and wish, whether for their own convenience or for political motives to carry slavery in with them, but for the millions who would eventually settle and be born there. "Slave States," said Lincoln, speaking from his own father's experience, "are places for poor white people to remove from, not to remove to. New free States are the places for poor people to go to, and better their condition. For this use the nation needs these Territories." And not only so, but the extension of slavery was the greatest of all perils to the liberties of the American people: they could never delegate their national powers in dealing with this danger to any section of the community.

Again, he argued, that the slave States of the South were not merely tolerated in the Union, but had had certain exceptional privileges granted to them on specific conditions. It was not only that the Fugitive Slave Law—which compelled the Federal officers in every State to capture and hand over the runaway negro to his master in another State—was hateful to the North; but that the Constitution actually increased the voting power of a Southern State in proportion to the number of its slaves. But this, on condition that slavery should for ever be kept out of the territory north of the line laid down by the

Missouri Compromise, a territory now being faithlessly opened to slavery by Douglas and the partisans of the institution.

There had been secession talk in the South ; and the supporters of the Nebraska Bill now claimed for it the virtue of a union-saving measure. The plea was absurd. This bill had already filled the country with the vehement antagonism which must now be aroused by any attempted extension of slavery. Actual events, proceeding even then in Nebraska, were the heralds of a civil war ; and of the final abandonment of that spirit of mutual concession which alone had produced the Constitution and maintained the Union. The Missouri Compromise stood for that ; its repeal was fatal to that, not in Nebraska alone, but through the whole of America. And not only was it fatal, in its apparent consequences of civil war ; it was inevitably, essentially opposite to the spirit of the Republic. "Near eighty years ago we began by declaring that all men are created equal ; but now, from that beginning, we have run down to the other declaration, that for some men to enslave others is a 'sacred right of self-government.' These principles cannot stand together. They are as opposite as God and Mammon ; and whoever holds to the one must despise the other."

But Lincoln went on to show that it was the principle of Mammon that was gaining ground ; and he concluded :

"Our republican robe is soiled and trailed in the dust. Let us re-purify it. Let us turn and wash it white in the spirit, if not in the blood, of the Revolution. Let us turn slavery from its claims of 'moral



right' back upon its existing legal rights and its arguments of 'necessity.' Let us return it to the position our fathers gave it, and there let it rest in peace. Let us readopt the Declaration of Independence, and with it the practices and policy which harmonise with it. Let North and South—let all Americans—let all lovers of liberty everywhere join in the great and good work. If we do this, we shall not only have saved the Union, but we shall have so saved it as to make and to keep it forever worthy of saving. We shall have so saved it that the succeeding millions of free happy people the world over shall rise up and call us blessed to the latest generations."

It has been worth while to trace the outline and quote largely from this great speech, because it is probably the first in which the man adequately expressed himself. There are playful passages in it, but as a whole, it is charged with deep feeling, the speaker becoming at moments even prophetic in his intense realisation of the issues he was pleading before the people. He knew that he was speaking, not on behalf of a party, but in the name of all the peoples of the world who hope for liberty. He knew that he was appealing not, as was Douglas, to mere self-interest and popular passion, but to that sense of justice, that eternal principle at the heart of all society, which must triumph. And knowing that, there was no longer any trace of personal animus against his antagonist, such as Herndon has alleged marred his speeches two years earlier. The man was now the agent of a great idea—the apostle of the faith; his task was to persuade all men, to condemn none.

His speeches at Springfield and Peoria were not immediately repeated. The great Douglas himself, master of the Senate though he was, sought a truce, and proposed that they should both withdraw from the autumn contest. To this Lincoln agreed.<sup>1</sup>

He was now becoming recognised by his friends as the equal of Douglas in debate upon the great issue, and as easily the leader of the Anti-Nebraska men in his State. He naturally became their candidate for the United States Senate ; and would doubtless have been chosen had he not had the misfortune to be too loudly acclaimed by the abolitionists, who, without his consent, published his name as one of their own committee. This seems to have alienated certain votes necessary to his success, and would have resulted in the election of one of Douglas's supporters, had not Lincoln persuaded his own Whig friends to rally to an Anti-Nebraska Democrat.

The loss of the Senatorship was a real disappointment to Lincoln, a disappointment which was aggravated by the fact that it was partly due to his own mismanagement. It is true that the abolitionists were to blame, for their praise of Lincoln diminished the enthusiasm of his Whig supporters—a fact whose significance Lincoln never forgot. But he himself had been to blame also. He had been elected to the State Legislature, but had resigned in order to stand for the Senate. He had counted too confidently on his own previous large majority to secure

<sup>1</sup> The senator was however a slippery man, and he was induced to make a long speech two days later in contravention of their agreement. The incident suggests one of the unattractive features of his character. Lincoln had continually to reckon upon his want of political faith, a characteristic peculiarly detestable to "honest old Abe."

the seat for his successor. On its capture by the Douglas-men, the Whigs lost their slender majority in the Legislature, and were thus unable to elect the Senator.

He was disappointed, but, as he wrote to a friend, he was not "nervous." In the light of succeeding events his defeat seemed almost providential. It left him in Illinois, to pursue the task, then only commencing, of organising a new party in that State; and it gave him time amid the work of his profession<sup>1</sup> for the full consideration of the main issue, uncomplicated by the maelstrom of political forces and events which would have awaited him in Washington.

There is a story, given by Herndon as belonging to the months after this first Senatorial defeat, which is worth repeating here. A Springfield negro lad had gone to New Orleans without his "free papers," and was there detained, imprisoned, and in the natural course of things would have been shortly after sold into slavery. His mother appealed to Lincoln and Herndon, who went together to see the Governor of Illinois in the matter. He regretted that he was unable to give them any legal support. But Lincoln as he rose to go, is represented as saying emphatically, "By God, Governor, I'll make the ground in this country too hot for the foot of a slave, whether you have the legal power to secure the release of this boy or not." The phrasing is loose and suspiciously like Herndon's, but it conveys some idea of how strongly Lincoln felt in such concrete cases, and of how closely

<sup>1</sup> During the years 1855-6 he probably had the greatest pressure of important legal work.

he was united to the rapidly increasing body of those who hated slavery with all their souls.

This is further illustrated by a letter written in August, 1855, to Robertson, a prominent Kentuckian, who had taken part, thirty-six years before, in establishing the Missouri Compromise.

Lincoln felt that the hope of that earlier generation for the peaceful extinction of slavery was now dead.

"You are not a friend of slavery in the abstract. In that speech [on the Compromise] you spoke of 'the peaceful extinction of slavery,' and used other expressions indicating your belief that the thing was at some time to have an end. Since then we have had thirty-six years of experience: and this experience has demonstrated, I think, that there is no peaceful extinction of slavery in prospect for us. The signal failure of Henry Clay and other good and great men, in 1849, to effect anything in favour of gradual emancipation in Kentucky, together with a thousand other signs, extinguished that hope utterly. On the question of liberty as a principle, we are not what we have been. When we were the political slaves of King George, and wanted to be free, we called the maxim that 'all men are created equal' a self-evident truth, but now when we have grown fat, and have lost all dread of being slaves ourselves, we have become so greedy to be masters that we call the same maxim 'a self-evident lie.' The Fourth of July has not quite dwindled away; it is still a great day—for burning fire-crackers!!!<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The bitter sarcasm of this passage recalls the ironic *Boston Ballad* of Walt Whitman in the preceding year.

"That spirit which desired the peaceful extinction of slavery has itself become extinct with the occasion and the men of the Revolution. Under the impulse of that occasion, nearly half the States adopted systems of emancipation at once, and it is a significant fact that not a single State has done the like since. So far as peaceful voluntary emancipation is concerned, the condition of the negro slave in America, scarcely less terrible to the contemplation of a free mind, is now as fixed and hopeless of change for the better, as that of the lost souls of the finally impenitent. The Autocrat of all the Russias will resign his crown and proclaim his subjects free republicans sooner than will our American masters voluntarily give up their slaves."

He closed his letter with the words he had used to Judge Dickey a year earlier, and was soon to repeat and render famous.

"Our political problem now is, 'Can we as a nation continue together permanently—forever—half slave and half free?' The problem is too mighty for me—may God, in his mercy, superintend the solution."

A few days later he wrote to another and closer friend in Kentucky—Joshua Speed—with whom he continued to correspond.<sup>1</sup> The old comrades were drifting apart in political opinion; but their affection was warm as ever, and Lincoln sought to emphasise all that they still held in common.

<sup>1</sup> The correspondence had, however, become irregular. In 1846 Lincoln wrote, "You no doubt assign the suspension of our correspondence to the true philosophic cause; though it must be confessed by both of us, that this is rather a cold reason for allowing a friendship such as ours to die out by degrees." The letter quoted in the text shows that in reality the friendship endured; and there is evidence that it continued warm to the end.

We may regard Speed as a type of the best kind of Southern slave-owner ; a man who admitted slavery as wrong in the abstract and yet would rather dissolve the Union than consent to yield his legal rights. To him Lincoln wrote : " I . . . acknowledge your rights and my obligations under the Constitution in regard to your slaves. I confess I hate to see the poor creatures hunted down and caught and carried back to their stripes and unrequited toil : but I bite my lips and keep quiet.

" In 1841, you and I had together a tedious low-water trip on a steam-boat from Louisville to St Louis. You may remember, as I well do, that. . . there were on board ten or a dozen slaves shackled together with irons. That sight was a continued torment to me, and I see something like it every time I touch the Ohio River, or any other slave border. It is not fair for you to assume that I have no interest in a thing which has, and continually exercises, the power to make me miserable."

The next sentence shows that he had appreciated the abolition feeling in the Eastern States. " You ought rather to appreciate how much the great body of the Northern people do crucify their feelings in order to maintain their loyalty to the Constitution and the Union."

He then protests that he will do all in his power, though he fears it may be in vain, to keep Kansas and Nebraska free : and he urges Speed to do the same. He shows him clearly that the open corruption and anarchy in Kansas which every decent Southerner abhorred, was the fruit of Douglas's policy : and that Speed must remain a party to violence till he comes



out from the Democratic organisation. As to his own position, he says, "I think I am a Whig: but others say there are no Whigs, and that I am an Abolitionist . . . [though] I now do no more than oppose the extension of slavery." The letter closes with a tender of the old affection—"Yet let me say I am your friend forever, A. Lincoln."

Briefly to sum up Lincoln's position at this time, it would appear that, in the last twelve months, he had become convinced that with the Repeal of the Missouri Compromise it was inevitable that all compromises about slavery must soon be abandoned; that the slave-power would proceed forcibly to demand the repeal of the Constitution itself; that the people of America would resist that demand, and in the struggle that ensued, slavery would be rooted out of the soil of the Republic. These began to be his convictions, dim perhaps as yet and vague in outline, but becoming daily more definite and ominous to him; and now the progress of events made his next political step clear.

The year 1856, the year of a new Presidential contest, saw the rapid rise of the Republican party, which gathered to itself all the powerful but heterogeneous elements opposed to the Nebraska Bill. The original Nebraska Territory had been divided, and Kansas—the southern portion, lying contiguous to the slave State of Missouri which separated it from Illinois—had become the arena not only of bitter partisan warfare, but of a pro-slavery despotism supported by President Pierce. Missourians had dominated the first elections there, which took place in August, 1855, when Lincoln was writing to Robertson; and they had given Kansas over to slavery. But the

Free-state settlers—having passed round Missouri by way of Iowa—repudiated the action of the slavery party, and rejoined by formulating a new constitution of their own, which was duly presented to Congress towards the end of March, 1856, but was rejected by the Senate.

When, at the end of May, the first Republican State Convention met in Illinois, party feeling had been further consolidated by an outbreak of violence in the Senate itself, where Sumner, the radical Massachusetts member, in retaliation for his outspoken and somewhat too personal criticisms, had been set upon and nearly killed, by one of the representatives of South Carolina. The act ought to have been instantly censured and repudiated by the Democratic party and by the public opinion of the South : instead, it was hailed with every manifestation of public approval.

These incidents, following one another rapidly, made evident the need for a single political party which should effectually oppose the aggressions of slavery. Apparently, Lincoln had now made up his mind as to the action he must take. He had adjured Speed to come out from the Democratic party, and early in the spring of 1856, he finally left the Whigs and identified himself with the Republicans.

On February 22nd, he was in Decatur, where the Anti-Nebraska editors had met to commence the work of organisation ; and he spoke at the dinner which followed their deliberations. In these, although he had taken no official part, he had given the aid of his political knowledge.

The irrepressible Herndon, who contrived his

partner's absence two years earlier from an abolition meeting, now seems to have effected his formal acceptance of membership in the new party. During Lincoln's absence he ventured to set his partner's name, among many others, to a circular calling a meeting to appoint delegates to the State Convention. Exactly how Lincoln appreciated this forcing of his hand we shall probably never know: but when questioned, he seems to have confirmed it, telegraphing "All right; go ahead. Will meet you—radicals and all."

The delegates were appointed; the convention met and transacted its business. The Illinois Republican party was now a properly organised piece of political machinery. But it still stood stationary. It waited for driving power. As a party, its elements lacked fusion. It was a conglomeration of some five hundred heterogeneous fragments: Whigs, Know-nothings, Democrats, Abolitionists, who still clung to their former party cries, and were conscious still of their old party differences. Lincoln had recently had a painful example of this in the refusal of the Anti-Nebraska Democrats in the Legislature to support his candidature for the Senate. Could these men now forget their differences? Could they rally together and become a new party in the realisation of a national purpose?

It was Lincoln's opportunity; and when the meeting turned, perhaps spontaneously, to him with cries of "Lincoln!"—"Give us Lincoln!" he came out from the back of the audience, and mounted the platform amid a hush of expectation. He was on fire with emotion. Drawing himself up to his full height and

towering above them, his eyes blazing, his face white with passion, his head thrown back, he became transfigured before his hearers who forgot everything but the words that sprang burning from his lips. They crowded about him, the tears running down their cheeks, drawn as by an irresistible and awful spell. "At that moment," says one of them, "he was the handsomest man I ever saw." The adjective is inadequate. But in that access of inspiration, that hour of crisis, his features were transformed by the spirit set free within him. His words, or rather the fire of conviction and enthusiasm that broke from him, fused his hearers into one, and filled them with a new conviction. He was a man for the hour. Even the reporters present forgot their office in the inspiration they caught from him. But through their arduously reconstructed jottings we can yet catch something of the orator's power.

At the outset, he struck the note that, then and there, was the most powerful for unity: "Kansas shall be free!" From that, he approached the question of slavery, showing that its establishment in Kansas could only be the prelude to its nationalisation. For he observed in the signs of the times a sure and steady drift towards slavery; a growing indifference on the one hand, feebly meeting the ever bolder aggression on the other.

He prophesied that slavery would win its way by craft and violence until at last it would be met and dominated by the will of the people. In that will, once aroused, he had confidence; for slavery was a violation of eternal right. The American nation had been compelled by their conditions to temporise with

it, but they could never be convinced that it was other than a "black, foul lie." They knew that "those who deny freedom to others, deserve it not for themselves, and under the rule of a just God cannot long retain it." But surely they would soon cease to deny it: they would again begin to deserve it.

"The Union," he said, in view of the crisis in Kansas, "is undergoing a fearful strain; but it is a stout old ship, and has weathered many a hard blow, and the stars in their courses—ay, an invisible power greater than the puny efforts of men—will fight for us."

He warned his hearers against undertaking to accomplish more than they had actual strength for,—his watchword was a return to the safe lines of the Missouri Compromise. And he warned them, also, against violence: ballots were stronger than bullets, and they must stand for great principles and Constitutional action, whatever the provocation of their antagonists. But he also uttered his warning to the party of violence and disunion arrayed against him, crying, "We won't go out of the Union and you shan't."

However wildly the delegates may have cheered and applauded Lincoln's words at Bloomington, his warnings and forebodings were little heeded at the moment in Springfield. Even in his own city, if his speech made him the leader of his party, he was not always able to command a following among a people used rather to flattering words and glowing promises. At first he lost many old political friends, and a meeting called early in June was attended only by his partner and one other. But Lincoln was not daunted;

he knew the apathy was only apparent ; " While all seems dead the age itself is not. It liveth, as sure as our Maker liveth."

His appeal, at first apparently so unsuccessful, soon began to meet with a heartier response. During the canvass he seems to have made some fifty speeches, being urgently called from other parts of Illinois and from the neighbouring States to take a lead in the autumn campaign. He was busy, also, in the more personal labour of persuading individuals.

There were three Presidential Candidates, the " Americans " or Know-nothings still retaining the support of a large section of the former Whig party. It was Lincoln's special anxiety to win over the leaders of this party in Illinois, proving by ingenious political arguments that their only chance of success in the national election, lay in Illinois giving its vote against the Democrat, and that as the Know-nothings could not possibly carry the State, they could only secure this by supporting the Republican. He himself had been mentioned as a possible candidate for the vice-presidency, and in the Republican National Convention his name stood second among the favourites for that office ; Dayton of New Jersey receiving 259 votes, to 110 recorded for Lincoln. Even on the second ballot a certain number of representatives from New York, Pennsylvania and Connecticut, had still supported him. When he read the account of this in the papers, he said at first, that he reckoned it was " another great man, in Massachusetts, named Lincoln ; " but next day he seemed so much abstracted and pre-occupied, that Mr Whitney who was with him at the time, came in later years to



believe that his serious thought of becoming President dated from this occasion.

When the poll was declared in November, the Democrats had succeeded in electing James Buchanan of Pennsylvania, who received 1,800,000 votes as against the Republican's 1,300,000, and the 900,000 given to the third candidate. It was a "moral defeat" for the Democrats; and the power shewn by the new party and its popular, impulsive candidate, Colonel Frémont, astonished the country.

Speaking at Chicago in December, Lincoln might well prophesy victory, if only all the men devoted to the charter of American liberties would sink their minor differences and unite together. Thus united they would re-inaugurate the central ideas of the Republic. And this they could accomplish; for, said he, "the human heart is with us, God is with us."

## Chapter VII

# The Great Issue

The Dred Scott Decision—Lincoln's Criticisms—Douglas *versus* Buchanan—A House Divided—Lincoln and Emancipation—The Debates with Douglas—Lincoln loses the Senatorship again.

IF Buchanan's election was a disappointment to Lincoln, it was something worse to Douglas, who had succeeded in preventing Buchanan's nomination four years earlier without receiving it himself, and had now been checkmated by his more successful rival.

The relations between these two men—the older, President, the younger, the trusted leader of the Democratic party—soon became more than strained. For in the spring of 1857, Buchanan hastened to endorse the revolutionary decision then given by the Supreme Court in the famous Dred Scott Case, which declared, amongst other matters, that the Missouri Compromise was unconstitutional, and that Congress could never prohibit, but must always protect, slavery in the Territories. This latter part of the decision made Douglas's position almost untenable. While it delighted the Southern Slavery party, it outraged the genuine residuum of feeling against ultra-slavery views in the hearts of Northern Democrats; for it asserted that the negro was not merely a slave, but sheer

property without individual rights before the law. Moreover it reduced the doctrine of popular sovereignty to a figment, by declaring that the nation was pledged to protect slave-property as such, wherever it might be carried by its owner.

Douglas argued indeed with extraordinary resource and ingenuity that though the decision was just and valid, yet it left his "great principle" intact: for the Congressional guarantee of slavery must remain a dead-letter wherever a Territorial legislature refused it the support of local slave-laws and regulations.

Lincoln, in his reply delivered at Springfield on the 26th June 1857, might have attacked Douglas's corollary, but he was for the moment more concerned with the enormity of the decision itself. In a noble passage, he compared the condition in which the negro found himself at the time of the Revolution, and his condition since the Dred Scott decision. "In those days our Declaration of Independence was held sacred by all, and held to include all; but now, to aid in making the bondage of the negro universal and eternal it is assailed and sneered at and construed, and hawked at and torn, till, if its framers could rise from their graves, they could not recognise it at all. All the powers of earth seem rapidly combining against him [the negro]. Mammon is after him, ambition follows, philosophy follows, and the theology of the day is fast joining the cry. They have him in his prison-house; they have searched his person, and left no prying instrument with him. One after another they have closed the heavy iron doors upon him; and now they have him, as it were, bolted in with a lock of a hundred keys, which can never be unlocked with-

out the concurrence of every key—the keys in the hands of a hundred different men, and they scattered to a hundred different and distant places ; and they stand musing as to what invention, in all the dominions of mind and matter, can be produced to make the impossibility of his escape more complete than it is.”

We have had occasion to note Lincoln's devotion to the spirit of the Constitution : that devotion was almost more marked for the Declaration of Independence, the charter of the rights of Democracy ; and he never tired of extolling the second paragraph which begins : “ We hold these truths to be self-evident : That all men are created equal ; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights ; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” In the Springfield speech, he declared that the equality predicated was intended to apply to all men, and not to a particular colour or race as Douglas was fain to argue : and he pointed out that the statement was cleared of a mere vague generality by its definition of the equal rights which were declared to be possessed by all, rights not indeed at that time in the possession of all, but rights which it was the duty of the American Government to enforce as rapidly as circumstances permitted.

As a State Document the Declaration was not merely intended by the Fathers of the Revolution to mark, and aid in effecting, the separation of the American Colonies from Great Britain. “ They meant to set up a standard maxim for free society, which should be familiar to all, and revered by all ; constantly looked to, constantly laboured for, and even though never perfectly attained, constantly approximated, and

thereby constantly spreading and deepening its influence, and augmenting the happiness and value of life to all people of all colours everywhere. The assertion that 'all men are created equal' was of no practical use in effecting our separation from Great Britain ; and it was placed in the Declaration not for that, but for future use. Its authors meant it to be—as thank God, it is now proving itself—a stumbling-block to all those who in aftertimes might seek to turn a free people back into the hateful paths of despotism. They knew the proneness of prosperity to breed tyrants, and they meant when such should re-appear in this fair land and commence their vocation, they should find left for them at least one hard nut to crack."

This was spoken at the end of June. During the autumn, though he was closely engaged in the courts, Lincoln's political position in Illinois became steadily stronger, and there seemed good reason to believe that he would be nominated and elected United States Senator in the following year. But an unforeseen circumstance intervened.

The two parties in Kansas had tried their strength at the polls, the slavery party voting for the so-called Lecompton Constitution, and the free-state party, now in the majority, for that of Topeka. A Congressional Committee had exposed the electoral frauds by which a minority of pro-slavery men had secured the complete military and political control of the territory. But in spite of this, the President decided in favour of admitting Kansas to the Union as a slave-state under the fraudulent Lecompton Constitution. This was too much for Douglas, who really believed in popular

sovereignty and held that the people of Kansas should freely decide their own destinies. His personal feeling, his political principles, the party position in his own State, all combined to render support of the Administration on this point impossible, and at the end of 1857 he broke with that section of his party which controlled the power and patronage of the President. It was a bold act, and added much and rightly to Douglas's personal prestige. Politically, it resulted in his retention of the senatorship, but also in his subsequent loss, for a third and last time, of the presidency.

Douglas's heroic struggle against the Lecompton Constitution, though a forlorn hope in the Senate, resulted in its defeat in the Lower House. It won him the admiration of Seward, the most powerful of the Republican Leaders, and of Horace Greeley, editor of *The New York Tribune*, who went so far as to urge that he should be supported for the Senatorship by all the anti-Lecompton men in Illinois.

Lincoln's position thus became difficult. He knew that the author of the Nebraska bill was by no means a Republican at heart, and that, to accept him in Illinois, meant to make him the national leader of the party, and so to destroy the party itself. Greeley's attitude gave him such anxiety that he was glad when Herndon decided to go to Washington, New York, and New England to feel the pulse of Eastern opinion. He there found that, while some among them took Greeley's view, Lincoln was becoming known and respected by the national leaders of the party. Yet the defections were serious, and perhaps the most serious of all—one which, as Lincoln himself con-



sidered, cost him the Senatorship—was that of Senator Crittenden, the old Whig leader in Kentucky, and the former friend of Henry Clay.

By June, however, Republican opinion in Illinois itself seemed to be completely united in favour of a contest, and when the Convention met in Springfield, Lincoln's was the only name upon men's lips.

On receiving the enthusiastic and unanimous nomination, he responded with the now famous pronouncement which he had long been preparing—writing it, as it came to him in moments of inspiration, upon scraps of paper carefully deposited in his hat—a pronouncement upon which he accepted no advice, submitting it to no one until a few hours before its delivery. Then it was received with blank astonishment and horror by his friends. Herndon says that he was the only one of them all who approved it.

But Lincoln's mind was set. "Friends," he said, "this thing has been retarded long enough.<sup>1</sup> The time has come when these sentiments should be uttered; and if it is decreed that I should go down because of this speech, then let me go down linked to the truth—let me die in the advocacy of what is just and right." A few months earlier Douglas had used similar words in the Senate: "If, standing firmly by my principles, I should be driven into private life, it is a fate that has no terrors for me." Both men were in earnest and had now burned their boats; the issue was to be a battle of giants, and a battle to the death.

And now, what was the issue as Lincoln defined it

<sup>1</sup> It is said that he had begun to promulgate "this thing" two years before, but on the advice of his friends had withdrawn it as then inopportune. See page 142.

that night of the 16th June 1858? These are his actual words: "Mr President and Gentlemen of the Convention: If we could first know where we are, and whither we are tending, we could better judge what to do and how to do it. We are now far into the fifth year since a policy was initiated with the avowed object and confident promise of putting an end to slavery agitation. Under the operation of that policy, that agitation has not only not ceased, but has constantly augmented. In my opinion it will not cease until a crisis shall have been reached and passed.

" 'A house divided against itself cannot stand.' I believe this government cannot endure, permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved—I do not expect the house to fall—but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other. Either *the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction*: or its advocates will push it forward till it shall become alike lawful in all the States, old as well as new, North as well as South."

Lincoln, having defined "squatter sovereignty" as the doctrine "that if any one man choose to enslave another, no third man shall be allowed to object," pointed out that those who upheld it were now being carried along inevitably towards the far more startling position, to which the Dred Scott decision pointed the way, that no Territory, and indeed no State, can constitutionally exclude slavery. And he went so far as to suggest that there was a great conspiracy to this end, to which Douglas himself, as well as President

Buchanan, was a party. He did not wish to misrepresent his opponent's motives, but so long as Douglas could aver, as he had done repeatedly, his own indifference to the moral question of slavery, so long as he could profess to regard it as a purely commercial and industrial question, it was, to say the least, impossible for him effectually to oppose the policy which was handing over America into the safe-keeping of slavery.

The speech startled more than its immediate hearers to attention. In spite of the growth of abolition sentiment the great body of the Northern people were still passionately asserting, as their fathers did before them, that the only security for national unity was in the spirit of compromise. There were a few great political leaders like Chase of Ohio, an ex-Democrat, who were outspoken Abolitionists of many years' standing. But even Seward, the radical ex-Whig, had not yet made his famous declaration concerning this "irrepressible conflict" between freedom and slavery. And here was Lincoln apparently forecasting a struggle to the death—a struggle for which neither the Democrats nor the Republicans were prepared, and which only the more violent extremists dared to consider. Even they thought and spoke rather of peaceful secession: but he, of a final decision *within the Union*.

On more careful consideration, however, it is evident that Lincoln's statement, clear-cut and forcible as it is, was by no means revolutionary. He wished to return to the principle of the Missouri Compromise, the principle, that is, of defining forever the limits of slavery, that it might be placed in a position of

disadvantage, and so of ultimate extinction, in its relation to the freely expanding and developing industrial system of the North.

But Douglas chose to regard Lincoln's speech as an appeal to the arbitrament of war, and from this time forward did everything in his power to identify him with the Abolitionist party. That party,<sup>1</sup> though powerful, for example, in Ohio, was still a small minority in Illinois, and the bulk of its adherents were in the northern part of the State. It was pledged to bring about the immediate emancipation of the negroes in the South by means of Congressional interference in their domestic affairs, that is to say, by a constitutional revolution.

Theoretically, of course, this policy might be defended as the best. But under the then prevailing condition of feeling in the South, it spelt either war or secession. Lincoln was opposed to it; he regarded it as socially unjust, and politically impracticable and inexpedient, and therefore wrong. He was earnestly opposed to slavery, and he saw in it the one serious peril to the national life. But he proposed to find deliverance from it by constitutional processes of growth: he would cease to foster and encourage it by any national guarantees beyond those tacitly existing in the constitution; he would finally and forever circumscribe its territories, giving to it, as an established institution, nothing more nor less than the terms already agreed upon. He would hold it rigidly to those terms.

But he knew that the slavery party would not

<sup>1</sup> Lincoln afterwards described it as being not so much a party, as a "corporal's guard."

willingly submit ; he saw that it was a disloyal party of aggression and revolution. And he held that the only way to meet it was not by counter-revolution, but by a more determined enlightened devotion, on the part of its opponents, to the spirit of the Constitution.

If Lincoln's speech brought consternation to his friends, it did not please Douglas, who returned to Chicago shortly afterwards from Washington. He had wished to carry through his canvass in Illinois solely on the merits of his gallant fight against President Buchanan, and not at all upon the ultimate issue. He knew Lincoln's power of analysis, and if he dreaded any man's attack it was that of his old rival, who, as he had said four years earlier, had given him more trouble by his assault upon the Nebraska policy than all the opposition in the Senate.

On the 10th July, Douglas replied to Lincoln at Chicago, accusing him of the desire to stereotype into uniformity the domestic customs of all the States. Lincoln rejoined on the day following, defining and defending his speech to the Convention. In this rejoinder he spoke of the Declaration of Independence as the greatest bond between Americans. They do not all share in the blood of those that fought for Liberty, there are many who have come over, since those years, from Europe—"they cannot carry themselves back into that glorious epoch and make themselves feel that they are part of us ; but when they look through that old Declaration of Independence, they find that those old men say that ' We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal,' and then they feel that that moral sentiment, taught

in that day, evidences their relation to those men, that it is the father of all moral principle in them, and that they have a right to claim it as though they were blood of the blood, and flesh of the flesh, of the men who wrote that Declaration; and so they are. That is the electric cord in that Declaration that links the hearts of patriotic and liberty-loving men together, that will link those patriotic hearts as long as the love of freedom exists in the minds of men throughout the world."

A week later, Douglas spoke at Bloomington, and then at Springfield, Lincoln replying in the evening of each day. And on the 24th July, he sent a challenge to Douglas to meet him in a series of joint public debates. Lincoln's advantage lay in his hard, straight hitting, and he could have adopted no better means of using this.

Douglas said of him: "I shall have my hands full. He is the strong man of his party—full of wit, facts, dates—and the best stump speaker, with his droll ways and dry jokes, in the West. He is as honest as he is shrewd, and if I beat him my victory will be hardly won."

But Douglas had the advantage in certain directions. He knew that Lincoln's movements were slow, and that he might be stumbled by any adroit and unexpected attack. He knew also, that in debate, he himself was more than a match for any man he had met in Congress, whether Seward, Chase, or Sumner; and that the younger men of his own State were devoted to him. He had all the prestige of success, all the advantages of money on his side, and he was readier than his opponent to use that dangerous weapon



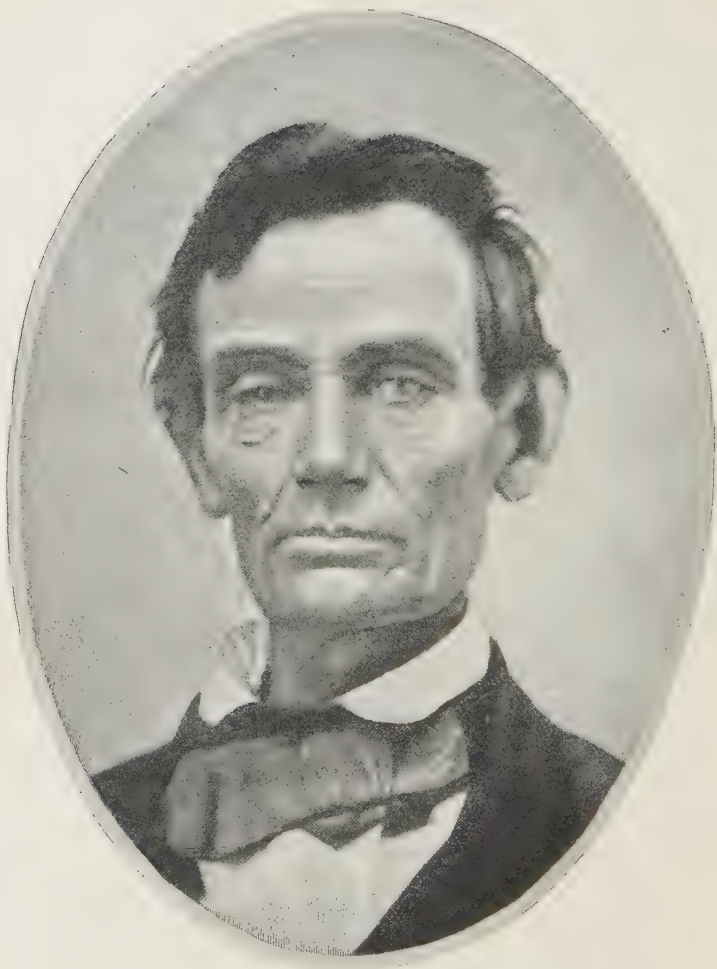
of the demagogue, the insinuation of damaging actions and motives which could neither be proved or disproved.

Douglas hesitated, but finally he accepted. He had not wanted to meet Lincoln, who obviously stood to gain far more and to lose less by the encounters than did he. But he could hardly avoid the challenge. His acceptance delighted his supporters, who naturally underestimated Lincoln's ability and foresaw good sport, but an easy triumph for their hero.

Seven meetings were arranged, at Ottawa, Freeport and Galesburg in the Northern part of the State, at Quincy on the Western and Charleston on the Eastern borders, and at Alton and Jonesboro' in the south. The opening speech, delivered alternately by the candidates, was to be of an hour's duration ; the reply, of an hour and a half, and the rejoinder, half an hour. Douglas claimed the advantage of four out of the seven opening and closing speeches. The debates began at Ottawa on the 21st August, and closed at Alton on 15th October. They were fully reported and widely noticed in the Press all over the country, and were besides attended by an aggregate of perhaps eighty or a hundred thousand people, women taking as great an interest in them as men.

It would be difficult to exaggerate their historic importance, for they exposed all the weaknesses of Douglas and his political position, while for the first time they lifted Lincoln into sight above the heads of other, merely provincial, politicians. Douglas was the one man in the Democratic party in whom the people of the North had faith ; Lincoln not only did much in these debates to destroy that faith, he proved himself to be no second-rate Congress-man, or mere country





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attorney, but a statesman not far from the first rank, a possible leader for a national party if, for any reason, its actual leaders should fail in the crisis before them.

In a word, the debates realised Douglas's worst fears, and more than the highest hopes of Lincoln and his friends; yet Douglas was re-elected to the United States Senate, and Lincoln fell back again into apparent insignificance and comparative poverty. But something like this result he had foreseen and chosen. In one of the earlier speeches he had said: "Take no thought for the political fate of any man whomsoever, but come back to the truths that are in the Declaration of Independence. You may do anything with me you choose, if you will but heed these sacred principles. . . . While pretending no indifference to earthly honours, I do claim to be actuated in this contest by something higher than an anxiety for office. I charge you to drop every paltry and insignificant thought for any man's success. It is nothing; I am nothing; Judge Douglas is nothing. But do not destroy that immortal emblem of Humanity—the Declaration of American Independence."

It was in this spirit that Lincoln went into that great contest. Throughout these debates, though often led into tedious side issues, upon the whole he rises clear of mere senatorial conflict, feeling himself destined to a higher office—not that indeed of the American Presidency, but that which Walt Whitman about this time has somewhere described as that of "Champion of America," promulgator before the people of the principles of the Republic. He seems fully to have realised the tremendous task he was undertaking, a task for which however he had been arduously pre-

paring himself; the one task for which, more than any other, he was fitted. And in these debates he rose by sustained effort to a new moral stature.

Although the debates themselves, like the one hundred and twenty other speeches made by the rivals during the autumn, are now not a little wearisome to the reader, we must note some of their leading incidents and positions.

Douglas began with great pomp and display—special trains, and the most elaborate preparations for his due reception—and treated his opponent with a good-natured patronage and contempt, in keeping with his own superior position. He conceived that he could easily split Lincoln's supporters into two camps, draw away all but the abolitionist extremists, and even seriously discomfit them by his exposures of Republican doublefacedness. But at the first debate he fell into the error of producing an abolitionist "platform" which he proceeded to fasten upon his opponent, only to have it exposed as a more or less deliberate forgery, and thus ultimately to damage his hold upon popular confidence.

He made a further mistake by asking Lincoln a series of questions intended to expose the ambiguity of his position, to which his opponent gave careful answers in the second debate, demanding in his turn that Douglas should reply to a similar series of adroit interrogatories.

The second of Lincoln's questions was asked against the advice of his political friends. It ran: "Can the people of a United States Territory, in any lawful way, against the wish of any citizen of the United States, exclude slavery from its limits,

prior to the formation of a State Constitution?" Douglas was bound to answer "Yes," and so doing to win the applause of Illinois, and probably to triumph in the immediate contest. But, so doing, he was equally certain irrevocably to alienate the Southern Slavery Party. The alienation had already begun; Lincoln's question gave it a definite, clear line of cleavage, and, as he prophesied, prevented Douglas's election to the Presidency in 1860.

In this Freeport debate, Douglas, who in dealing with a consummate logician like Lincoln needed the utmost self-control, lost his temper; and indeed he seems to have done so on more than one occasion. Lincoln himself could not always keep the high level he endeavoured to maintain, but sometimes betrayed bitterness toward his successful rival, who could so adroitly make the worse appear the better cause.

At Jonesboro' in the extreme South, amid a pro-slavery audience, Lincoln's speech seems to have been somewhat thin, legal, and difficult; and Douglas—with his inuendoes and glosses—must have had the meeting all his own way. Again in the fourth debate, before some 20,000 people, much time was wasted by Lincoln in his efforts to disprove the personal attacks made by Douglas at their last meeting, and his more or less successful manoeuvres to put a construction of his own upon his opponent's statements. But his rejoinder on this occasion seems to have been particularly crushing. In this Lincoln stated very clearly that he was not in favour of negro citizenship; and that he anticipated that the ultimate peaceful extinction of slavery would take at least a century.



In the fifth debate at Galesburg, he accused Douglas of debauching public opinion by his declaration of moral indifference on the slavery question. He showed that now, since the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, it was only the power of moral conviction which could keep slavery out of the Free States as well as out of the Territories ; and that, by his attitude, Douglas was, however reluctantly, preparing the way for the nationalisation of slavery. This accusation was, perhaps, the most convincing that Lincoln made. Douglas's appeals carried the younger men off their feet : Lincoln's sunk deep into the hearts of those who were more experienced, and stirred them to new moral determination.

In the sixth discussion he laid down the lines of party division. The Republicans were those, and only those, who definitely regarded slavery as a moral, social and political wrong, and proposed to deal with it as such, subject to the guarantees of the Constitution. Those who denied these guarantees were not Republicans : but neither were those who held that slavery was not wrong. These last were the Democrats. The real difference between the parties was thus a fundamental moral difference.

When Douglas in his reply spoke of slavery enduring forever, he shewed the truth of Lincoln's statement. In his rejoinder, Lincoln made use of the inimitable simile, that now, Douglas's squatter sovereignty having been "squatted out by the Dred Scott decision," he had replaced it by a Do-nothing sovereignty — "a homeopathic soup" "made from the shadow of a starved pigeon."

Returning to his statement of principles, in the

last great encounter at Alton opposite to St Louis, where Douglas had proclaimed himself the living representative of Henry Clay and of true Whig policy—Lincoln had retorted that there was only one issue between them—is slavery right or wrong? It was in vain for Judge Douglas and his followers to declare themselves indifferent. They must inevitably come to take sides—and if, as they now confessed, they favoured the perpetuation of slavery, they had already chosen their part. “It is the eternal struggle between these two principles—right and wrong—throughout the world. They are the two principles that have stood face to face from the beginning of time, and will ever continue to struggle. The one is the common right of humanity, and the other the divine right of kings. . . . Whenever the issue can be distinctly made, and all extraneous matter thrown out, so that men can fairly see the real difference between the parties, this controversy will soon be settled, and it will be done peaceably, too.”

Many other speeches were made on both sides during the contest, and Lincoln had the support of speakers from other States; notably, of Governor Chase, the stalwart Abolitionist and Free-Soil leader of Ohio. He had, also, the tacit assistance of Douglas's enemies, the party of President Buchanan. We need not stay to consider the events which led up to the poll, except to quote a racy and pointed illustration which Lincoln must have used very effectively against the representatives of that school of a merely traditional orthodoxy whose ponderous weight is everywhere so infallibly cast against progress.

“The sum of pro-slavery theology seems to be this : ‘Slavery is not universally right, nor yet universally wrong ; it is better for some people to be slaves ; and, in such cases, it is the will of God that they be such.’

“Certainly there is no contending against the will of God ; but still there is some difficulty in ascertaining and applying it to particular cases. For instance, we will suppose the Rev. Dr Ross has a slave named Sambo, and the question is : ‘Is it the will of God that Sambo shall remain a slave, or be set free ?’ The Almighty gives no audible answer to the question, and His revelation, the Bible, gives none—or at most none but such that admits of a squabble as to its meaning ; no one thinks of asking Sambo’s opinion on it. So at last it comes to this, that Dr Ross is to decide the question ; and while he considers it, he sits in the shade, with gloves on his hands, and subsists on the bread that Sambo is earning in the burning sun. If he decides that God wills Sambo to continue a slave, he thereby retains his own comfortable position ; but if he decides that God wills Sambo to be free, he thereby has to walk out of the shade, throw off his gloves, and delve for his own bread. Will Dr Ross be actuated by the perfect impartiality which has ever been considered most favourable to correct decisions?”

The contest came to its end on the 2nd November ; the Republicans polling 125,000, the Douglas Democrats, 121,000, and the Buchanan Democrats 5000 votes. The Senator was, however, to be chosen by the State Legislature, and this, consisting of 54 Democrats and 46 Republicans, supported Douglas. As one of Lincoln’s biographers admits, in writing of Douglas, there has hardly been a “greater personal

triumph in the history of American politics, than his re-election." On the other hand, Lincoln's personal defeat was connected in the minds of all far-sighted men with the ultimate triumph of the principle for which he was fighting ; and even on the personal side, we may accept the statement of *The New York Evening Post*, that "no man of this generation has grown more rapidly before the country than Lincoln in this canvass." Not least before the eyes of his fellow Illinoisians. They had known "Old Abe," ever since they came into the State as a capable, good fellow, but one of themselves. Now they discovered with surprise that he was a great public character, whose moral insight and intellectual qualities raised him head and shoulders above them all.

After the tremendous strain and fierce excitement of the struggle, the result was, it must be admitted, a severe disappointment. As Lincoln quaintly said, he felt "Like the boy that stumped his toe—it hurt too bad to laugh, and he was too big to cry." But though he was beaten, and though his personal share in the expenses amounted to a very large part of the year's income, which he could ill afford to lose, yet he was glad he had made the effort.

"It gave me a hearing on the great and durable question of the age, which I could have had in no other way," he wrote to an old Springfield friend ; "and though I now sink out of view, and shall be forgotten, I believe I have made some marks which will tell for the cause of civil liberty long after I am gone."

It was for the cause of civil, and not merely negro liberty, worthy as that cause was, that he was contending. He saw American slavery as the enemy not of

four million blacks, but of the cause of liberty throughout the whole world. For it was a canker in the very heart of a nation which, as he held, could only be true to its destiny in so far as it was true to the spirit of the Declaration spoken at its birth. It was a canker in the heart of America, because the perpetuation of slavery meant the abandonment of a great hope—the hope of universal freedom, of universal equality of opportunity, of universal citizenship. To lose that hope would be to abandon the purpose for which the American nation had come into being.

So, although he wished to see the liberation of the negro effected, he refused to dwell upon that as the end in view. The end was more than that—it was the whole “cause of civil liberty.” And to that end as he conceived, every American was implicitly pledged. There was something deep down in the heart of every one of his fellow-citizens which could not fail to respond to the call of that Cause.

## Chapter VIII

# The Nation Chooses

Lectures on Discoveries—Cooper Institute Speech—Becomes a Presidential Candidate—The Chicago Convention—The Platform—The Campaign of 1860.

THE struggle for the Senatorship, with its hundred days of summer heat, and constant travel, and more than daily speech-making, was enough to test the strength of any man. Douglas had been already over-strained, and was now exhausted, and Lincoln was tired, though not broken by it. If he had ever had any tendency to consumption, as he supposed, we can only surmise that the outdoor life with all its mental and physical movement suited him well. His heroic power of endurance was a constant astonishment to his friends.

The difficulty he felt was not that of nervous exhaustion, but rather, that of poverty. He could hardly now afford to continue the great work for America to which he had put his hand. He had lost the opportunity offered by the emoluments of a Senator, and half a year of professional earnings, beside the sums which he had contributed toward the expenses of the canvass. For awhile he contemplated making good this financial deficiency by popular lectures ; and prepared one, at least, under the title of



*Discoveries, Inventions and Improvements*, apparently delivering it for the first time on Washington's birthday, 1859.

The lecture opened with a shrewd and humorous portrait of Douglas's "Young America," possessed by a Platonic "longing after" territory,—and a "perfect rage for the 'new'; particularly new men for office, and the new earth mentioned in the Revelations, in which, being no more sea, there must be about three times as much land as in the present. He is a great friend of humanity; and his desire for land is not selfish," quoth Lincoln, "but merely an impulse to extend the area of freedom,"—with much more in the same excellent vein of political fooling, gradually giving place to a more serious view of his subject. He was however dissatisfied with his success as a lecturer, and after a few attempts abandoned the enterprise.

The summer was principally devoted to law, to careful watching over the Republican organisation in Illinois, and to refusing the invitations for speech-making which now came to him from all parts of the Northern States, and to which it was impossible for him to accede. He had spoken at Chicago in March, and in April had written that, although flattered by the suggestion, he regarded himself as unfit for the Presidency, and deprecated any concerted effort to obtain a nomination. Later in the year he professed his preference for a full six-years' term in the Senate to one, of four years, in the White House.

He was continually urging Republicans not to stultify their main position, their assertion of the evil of slavery, in order to win support: nor to allow

themselves to be separated by local dissensions. He still regarded Douglas as the most dangerous, because the most insidious, enemy of liberty ; and when the latter took a part in the autumn campaign in Ohio, Lincoln followed and replied to him with effect both at Columbus and Cincinnati.

In his speech at the latter place, he defined his position as follows, addressing himself especially to the men across the river, the men of his native State : " I say, then, in the first place, to the Kentuckians, that I am what they call, as I understand it, a 'Black Republican.' I think slavery is wrong, morally, and politically. I desire that it should be no further spread in these United States, and I should not object if it should gradually terminate in the whole Union."

Probably the most striking passage was that in which he spoke of the relations between Capital and Labour then existing in the West ; but singularly enough it is only partly rendered in the report. He seems, however, to have repeated it in his address before the Wisconsin Agricultural Society at their Annual Fair, a fortnight later, when he implicitly upheld the doctrine that Labour, so far from being dependent upon Capital, is the source of all Capital, independent of it, and greatly its superior ; and that Labour, Education and Capital are best combined in one person—that of the free, intelligent, independent labourer, the hope and stock of America. For the rest, he seems still to have remained an advocate of Clay's so-called American system and its protective tariffs, arguing against the industrial wastefulness of long distance carriage, and advocating more thorough culture and local development.

Early in December he accepted an invitation to visit north-eastern Kansas, where the Republicans still leaned towards Douglas. Here he again exposed the "ambuscade" of "popular sovereignty."

But even while Lincoln was thus arguing against Douglas's nostrum, the attention of his hearers was rivetted upon Virginia. For there John Brown, a well-known figure in Kansas through the days of civil strife, was being executed for treason, conspiracy, and murder, in consequence of his raid upon the Government Arsenal at Harper's Ferry, and his attempt to raise the negroes of the State in revolt against their masters. Lincoln referred at the time to this event in the following words :

"Old John Brown has been executed for treason against a State. We cannot object, even though he agreed with us in thinking slavery wrong. That cannot excuse violence, bloodshed, and treason. It could avail him nothing that he might think himself right."

These sentences were spoken as a warning to the slavery party, which was threatening "violence, bloodshed, and treason" against the nation.

Brown's raid had taken place in October. In the same month Lincoln received an unexpected invitation to lecture in Brooklyn. He accepted ; and fully realising the importance of this opportunity, laboured assiduously at his address, which was delivered on 27th February at the Cooper Institute, New York. Douglas and other Democrats had attempted to prove that the raid was the logical and inevitable outcome of Republican doctrines. In this speech Lincoln emphatically repeated the assertion made in Kansas, and dissociated the whole policy of the raid from that

of the Republican party. The raid was described as the work of a solitary enthusiast brooding "over the oppression of a people till he fancies himself commissioned by Heaven to liberate them." It was an attempt to assassinate the slave-power. Politically, Lincoln repudiated John Brown. He was not a Republican; he was not a Constitutionalist. For better and worse, he was a rebel, a fanatical exponent of the abolitionism which took for its cry, "No union with slave-owners," and described the Constitution as "a covenant with death and an agreement with Hell." Lincoln, I need hardly add, had always regarded this as false political doctrine.

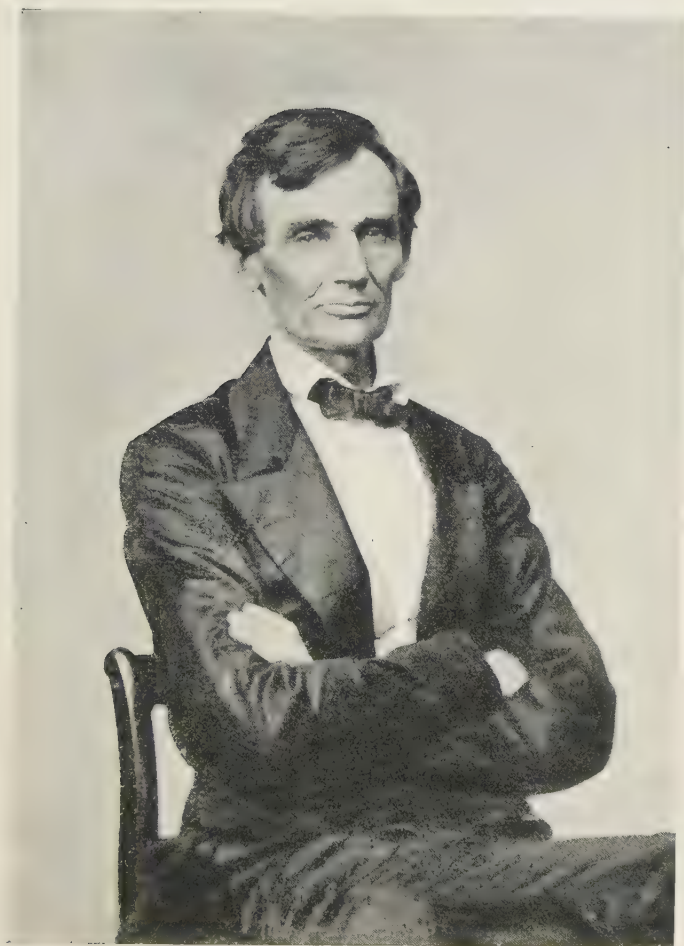
Lincoln's Cooper Institute Speech is generally counted among his ablest addresses, but naturally it traverses much of the ground already made familiar through the joint debates. He adopted as his text the declaration of Douglas that the Fathers of the Constitution understood the large political problem of American Slavery at least as well or even better than his own contemporaries. He proceeded, by a close and careful argument, to define their position, and to prove that they not only held that Congress had the constitutional power to control all extension of slavery into the Territories, but that they themselves had used that power to restrict the area of slavery. He closed with a vigorous protest against the aggressions of the slavery party, who would never be contented while a single man condemned their favoured institution as morally evil; and an appeal to all who did so regard it, fearlessly and effectively to do their duty, in the faith that "right makes might."

The speech owes something of its acknowledged

importance to the conditions under which it was delivered, and the imminent nominations for the Presidency. The speaker, who was at first uncomfortably conscious of his new suit, and began his speech in a low voice with quaint Western pronunciation, was introduced by William Cullen Bryant, poet, politician, and journalist, perhaps at that time the most distinguished man in New York ; and his argument was closely followed by a critical audience of city men and women very different from those to which he was accustomed. At first inclined to smile, they soon forgot both themselves and the speaker in the enthusiasm which his words aroused. His reception is indicated by this sentence from Horace Greeley's report in the *Tribune*,—"No man ever made such an impression on his first appeal to a New York audience." Two years before, Greeley, as we know, had not been favourable to Lincoln, and indeed the two men belonged to different schools, and never, for long together, saw eye to eye. We may therefore accept the statement as disinterested.

From New York, Lincoln made a second tour in New England, where Robert, his eldest son, was at school. His speeches in Connecticut and elsewhere are naturally freer in style and fuller of humour than was his more classical effort in the metropolis. In them all he is continually emphasising the basis of the Republican policy ; and though he must have felt the violent spirit of secession which was already in the air, he continued calmly to state and argue the pros and cons of slavery, as a social, industrial, and political factor in American life.

His speech at New Haven, Connecticut, on 6th March, contains a trenchant but homely statement of



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the political blindness of self-interest, and especially of vested interests.

"The slaveholder," said Lincoln, "does not like to be considered a mean fellow for holding that species of property, and hence he has to struggle within himself, and sets about arguing himself into the belief that slavery is right. The property influences his mind. The dissenting minister who argued some theological point with one of the established church was always met by the reply, 'I can't see it so.' He opened the Bible and pointed him to a passage, but the orthodox minister replied, 'I can't see it so.' Then he showed him a single word, 'Can you see that?' 'Yes, I see it,' was the reply. The dissenter laid a guinea over the word, and asked, 'Do you see it now?' So here. Whether the owners of this species of property do really see it as it is, it is not for me to say; but if they do, they see it as it is through two billions of dollars, and that is a pretty thick coating. Certain it is that they do not see it as we see it. Certain it is that this two thousand million of dollars invested in this species of property is all so concentrated that the mind can grasp it at once. This immense pecuniary interest has its influence upon their minds."

Already, before going East, Lincoln had admitted that he was a possible candidate for the Presidency; and though, on his return to Springfield, he wrote to a friend that he was anxious to do nothing which might be considered as ungenerous to ex-Governor Chase, who had helped him in 1858, yet he was probably fully occupied with quiet, unostentatious preparations and wire-pulling. For, once he had consented to allow his name to be brought before the

party as a candidate for the highest office, he was the last man to miss any possible chance of securing success. He knew that, if he should be the party candidate, it would be simply because he was more likely to win the election than his more distinguished and experienced rivals. His triumph could not be a dazzling personal victory ; it could only be won by dogged work, and the widest co-operation. To fail was perhaps to lose the last hope of saving the honour, and so the reality, of the Union—the national life. Careful study of men and of the political tendencies of the time seems gradually to have convinced him that he was the candidate most likely to win the election for the national cause ; and when he was so convinced, it became his urgent duty unobtrusively to seek the nomination, and in every way possible to second the efforts of his friends in order that he might secure it.

Seward was regarded as the leader of the Republicans, and would doubtless have received the party nomination if he had not alienated the more conservative section by the revolutionary deductions drawn from his declaration that the moral law was higher than that of the Constitution, and by the fact that he was not a *persona grata* in those doubtful States upon which both parties counted for the votes which would decide the election.

It was largely because Seward was too well known, having been already a figure in the public eye for a quarter of a century, that he was not the chosen candidate. In spite of his great ability, his personality was hardly of a kind calculated to win the support of the West. And perhaps for this reason, or perhaps because

he was not the man for the hour, his political statements had aroused a distrust with which Lincoln had not been received.

Soon after the latter had made his declaration on "the house divided against itself," Seward had proclaimed "the irrepressible conflict"; that slavery and free-labour could not continue to co-exist; that the nation was becoming one; that the day of compromise was past; that a social revolution had commenced. And this had been read with widespread consternation by his more conservative supporters, upon whose enthusiasm his success depended.

The result of the contest might almost be calculated beforehand by so shrewd a politician as Lincoln. For Douglas, though secure of a nomination, had forfeited the favour of the Southern Democrats, and it was evident, even before the disruption of the Charleston (S.C.) Convention, that they would bring out a pro-slavery candidate against him and divide the party vote.

The nomination of Lincoln was prepared for in Illinois by the capture of the National Convention for Chicago, and by his nomination from the State Convention under the popular title of "the rail candidate" or "the rail-splitter," a reference to the first days he spent in Illinois when he made fence-rails with his axe. The title was not altogether fortunate, for men were immediately set questioning whether this fellow who was so good at splitting rails might not prove still better at splitting the Union. But on the whole, the description really appealed to the common people; they accepted the candidate as one of themselves, and made his cause their own. It seemed only the more fitting that till within a few

days of the Convention Lincoln should have remained in comparative obscurity. The Eastern journalists hardly dreamed of him as the possible rival of Seward: certainly Seward himself had little fear of his rivalry.

On 16th May, the Convention was opened. The mushroom city was crowded by 40,000 visitors, and filled everywhere with banners bearing the name of Lincoln. But the principal candidates, and Lincoln among them, were not present.

By a week of ceaseless persuasion and bargaining, the Illinois delegates<sup>1</sup> accomplished their task so well that, on the declaration of the third ballot, Lincoln received 231½ votes to Seward's 180, 53½ votes being divided between the remaining candidates. Immediately after this, his nomination was made unanimous, amid a scene of indescribable excitement, the great building seeming to sway with a wild storm of shouting, which lasted for nearly a quarter of an hour, amid which no one noticed the cannon booming on the roof above. Outside, the triumph of Illinois was hardly less tumultuous, and it spread and spread in concentric rings until it encircled the whole of the State.

Lincoln himself had remained in Springfield to bear the suspense as best he could. When the final telegram arrived, it was sometime before he could realise anything but the exultation of his friends. Then the personal significance struck him, and he slipped away, saying, "There is a little woman down on Eighth Street, who will be glad to hear the news."

<sup>1</sup> Lincoln's choice on this occasion was, of course, partly due to the personal ambitions of his lawyer friends.

That was the 18th May; next evening, in his little house, he received the delegation of distinguished Republicans who had come to present him officially with the nomination. He stood up in front of the fireplace, and bowed awkwardly as they entered. He felt that they were taking his measure, and was as stiff, diffident, and embarrassed as a school-boy under examination. The spokesman of the deputation made his brief speech, to which Lincoln listened attentively with eyes upon the floor. Then, with the moment for replying, his head went up, the lines of his face relaxed, his eyes shone with meaning, and his few well-chosen words were spoken with clearness, simplicity, and force. The formality over, he was eager to shake hands with each of his visitors; he was all humour and geniality; and before the two hours were out his whilom critics had been transformed into staunch supporters.

The party "platform" to which Lincoln now fully and heartily subscribed, denounced the aggressive and treasonable spirit which was everywhere advocating the sectional interests of slavery, indifferent to the welfare of the whole country. It branded as heresy the Dred Scott Decision, and denied the authority of Congress or any other power to abrogate the Constitutional law which prohibited slavery in the Territories. Besides these, the platform contains paragraphs dealing with other pressing matters of internal improvement and tariff adjustment; but it is notable that it contains no statement of Lincoln's own test of party membership, no declaration of the evil of slavery. The stress is laid instead upon the sectional character of the Democratic party, a successful attempt



to rebut the accusation that the Republicans drew all their support from the Northern States and could therefore never be regarded, like the old Whigs or the Democrats, as a national party.

In truth, the house was now divided against itself. The aggressions of slavery were the cause of division : and in so far as the Republican was an anti-slavery party, it was inevitable that, in its efforts to destroy the causes of a schism which had its roots in one section of the country, it should find its strength in the other, and thus, for a time, appear to be merely sectional.

After the nomination, Springfield was besieged by legions of men of every kind, anxious to see the Republican candidate. Lincoln received them no longer in his dingy office, but in the Governor's Room at the State House on the green, vacant now in the absence of the Legislature. He became henceforward only a sleeping partner in the firm of Lincoln & Herndon, his time being fully occupied with constant quiet work behind the scenes for the success of the great struggle now fairly begun. He had installed a private secretary ; and though he adroitly avoided the writing of public letters and the giving of addresses—those two most dangerous temptations of the Presidential Candidate—his new functionary was kept busy with a multitude of old and new correspondents.

On every side he received encouragement, even from directions least expected ; and his great rivals, Seward and Chase, in spite of their personal disappointment, became his loyal supporters, Seward, with splendid generosity, acting as the leader in his rival's campaign. Of course he had the Democratic party and press vehemently, and even unscrupulously, against him ;

while the Abolitionists, who would have supported Chase, were dissatisfied with Lincoln. They had long been denouncing any union with slave-holders ; it was but natural that an anti-slavery constitutionalism, which went so far as to acknowledge its obligations by supporting a Fugitive Slave Law, should be incomprehensible to them.

But the defection which caused him the most pain was probably that of the Springfield parsons. Yet he can hardly have counted on their support, for the accredited representatives of the Church were among the last to recognise his services to humanity. Twenty out of twenty-three were opposing his election. He drew the attention of one of his friends to this singular situation. "These men well know," he said, "that I am for freedom . . . and that my opponents are for slavery . . . and yet, with this book [the New Testament, which he drew from his pocket] in their hands, in the light of which human bondage cannot live a moment, they are going to vote against me ; I do not understand it at all.<sup>1</sup>

"I know there is a God, and that He hates injustice and slavery. I see the storm coming, and I know that His hand is in it. If He has a place and work for me, and I think He has, I believe I am ready. I am nothing, but truth is everything ; I know I am right because I know that liberty is right, for Christ teaches it and [they say that] Christ is God. I have told them that a house divided against itself cannot

<sup>1</sup>In the following sentences the reporter appears to have omitted a phrase, which I have ventured to supply, as the tone of all his other words show that Lincoln's religious views were on the whole similar to those of Dr Channing and Theodore Parker.

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stand, and Christ and reason say the same, and they will find it so.

"Douglas don't care whether slavery is voted up or down, but God cares, and humanity cares and I care, and with God's help I shall not fail. I may not see the end; but it will come, and I shall be vindicated, and these men will find they have not read their Bible right." "I think more upon these subjects," he added, "than upon all others, and I have done so for years."

Lincoln expressly stated on this occasion that he was not (technically) a Christian. At another time he said that when any church would inscribe over its altar, as the sole qualification for membership, the succinct summary of the commandments given by Jesus—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy . . . might, and thy neighbour as thyself"—he would join that church with all his heart and soul.

So little was Lincoln known in the Eastern States that, at the first, his nomination had generally been regarded there, as a renunciation by the party leaders of all ideals for the sake of mere availability. In this they were of course mistaken. Lincoln was a saner politician than his great rivals, but he was a man whose moral conviction was as much profounder than Seward's, as his human sympathies were broader than those of Chase. When Douglas heard of the nomination, he said truly, that his party had nominated a very able and a very honest man. In his words to Senator Wilson, he described Lincoln, as "one of the ablest men of the nation. I have been in Congress sixteen years, and there is not a man in the Senate I would not rather encounter in debate."

The Presidential Campaign, conducted on all sides

with great spirit, came to a conclusion on the 6th November.<sup>1</sup> There were four candidates, for not only were the Democrats divided into Northern and Southern Sections, but a new Constitutional Union party, which deprecated the whole slavery discussion, had sprung up. Douglas had broken the conventions of a presidential election, making an extraordinary personal canvass, unique in its character, contending as a Unionist against both Republicans and Secessionists with equal earnestness, in nearly every one of the States.

When the poll was declared he had secured strong popular support in all the Western and Middle States, but owing to the presence of four candidates, he had been unable to win the full Electoral vote of any but Missouri: while Breckinridge and Bell, whose combined popular support hardly exceeded Douglas's, received between them the Electoral vote of the fourteen Southern States. Lincoln on the other hand, carried all the eighteen Northern States, except New Jersey, whose vote was divided between him and Douglas; receiving a total vote of 1,866,452 as against Douglas's 1,375,157.

Much has been made of the undisputed fact that Lincoln was elected by a minority of the American people; by less than two million out of the four and a half million votes cast. But the other fact remains, that no rival candidate could, under the political circumstances of the time, have received all the votes distributed between Douglas, Breckinridge and Bell. Had the Democratic party held together, it might conceivably have combined the votes of Douglas and

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to recall that King Edward, then Prince of Wales, visited America in October, accompanied by the Duke of Newcastle.

Breckinridge—as it was Douglas was supported in the North because he denounced Breckinridge, and *vice versa*. Any readjustment of parties upon such lines would probably have given the bulk of Bell's votes to the Republican. Even in the extreme case, however, if one candidate had received all the votes cast against Lincoln, Lincoln would still have been chosen by the preponderant Electoral vote of the fifteen Northern States which gave him absolute majorities. And in any other case—that is to say if the nation had voted for or against the issue of slavery obscured both by Douglas and Bell—he would doubtless have secured a Popular majority as well as an Electoral one; for the Southern vote given to Breckinridge and Bell was not quite half as large as the Northern for Lincoln and Douglas; neither group of candidates receiving any considerable support in any but their own geographical section. But whatever one may calculate, as to hypothetical probabilities, Lincoln was elected. And of that result Longfellow truly wrote, “it is the redemption of the country.”

## Chapter IX

# President Lincoln

Lincoln's Responsibility—Interregnum—Cabinet Making—Farewell to Springfield—First Inaugural—An Ultimatum—Westerners and the Union—Lincoln and Secession—His Qualities of Leadership—His Appearance.

LINCOLN'S election was greeted with delight by others than his own supporters. The slavery men had come to distrust Douglas, while the choice of a Republican President was to be the signal for secession which South Carolina and her confederates were awaiting.

Lincoln, though he seems still to have regarded the Southern menace as consisting principally of bluster, must have realised more profoundly than he ever betrayed, the elements of tragedy underlying his triumph.

He had been confused, and even dazed, by the wild intoxication of enthusiasm evinced from time to time in his presence by his supporters. When the great Republican mass-meeting was held in Springfield, he had escaped hurriedly from its applause and had sought solitude. He sank frequently into profound dejection and melancholy now that the victory was won; a responsibility too heavy to be borne seemed to have fallen upon him. A friend describes him as



sadder now, "more abstracted and absent-minded, more humble, more subdued, apparently humiliated"; and sometimes, "sorrowful even unto death."

A curious illustration of the occult element in his nature is found in a story belonging to this period. It was after the nervous strain and tension of election day that he flung himself down exhausted on a couch in his room. There was a mirror opposite to him, and as he glanced at it he was startled to see there a double reflection of his face. When he sprang up to look more closely, it vanished, but appeared again as he lay down once more. It began to jar on his tired nerves: he could not rest and went away.

The thing puzzled him, less perhaps in itself, than because of the feeling he could not escape that it had some significance. The two faces had been distinct, one paler than the other, seeming like a sort of ghost. Once again a few days later he saw it, but after that, although he made many experiments, he could not recall the double image. His wife, who seems to have been interested in the occult, was even more impressed than he. She is said to have read into it an omen that he would be re-elected to the presidency, and die during his second term.

As he saw further and further into the mysterious destiny of the people who had now chosen him to execute their will, a "preternatural expression of exquisite grief" dwelt in his dark grey eyes. "I shall never be glad any more," he used to say.

Indeed, he had good grounds for this melancholy—beyond those of which he was fully aware. For the conspiracy of the slave-power was also matured. There were still four months before Lincoln could take

up his office, four months in which the slavery cabal at Washington might successfully continue to shelter itself under the Government while pursuing its destruction.

And not only was the national life imperilled by the conspiracy of its foes, it was in imminent danger from the hesitation of the President and the folly of its friends. The General at the head of the army had suggested, just before the election, that the Union should be broken up into four separate Confederacies ; while immediately after it, Horace Greeley impetuously declared that if the Southern States really wanted to secede they should not be prevented, adding, a little later, that they had "a clear moral right" to do so, and that he would aid them in its assertion. The feeling in favour of allowing peaceful secession was widespread among that earnest section of Abolitionists who deprecated any but moral suasion : the horror of civil war, as of a crime, was almost universal in the North. And other Republican leaders, including men like Seward, were eager for compromises which should satisfy, or at least silence, the Southern clamour ; and were ardently seconded by the merchants and "commercial interests" in New England, Pennsylvania, and New York, for whom there was no terror like the unsettlement of the markets.

The year 1860 ended with a Cabinet crisis consequent upon the secession of South Carolina, and the virtual abdication of President Buchanan. But the Government gained greatly in strength by the substitution of several strong and able Union Democrats for avowed Secessionists.

Nevertheless, when, on 4th February, a Peace

Congress met in Washington for purposes of compromise, Secession had grown apace; there were already seven of the thirty-three States which had come to regard themselves as foreign nations. These promptly united to form a Southern Confederacy, electing Jefferson Davis of Mississippi as President, and Alexander H. Stephens of Georgia, Vice-president, and rapidly organising their military and naval resources.

Mr Stephens had, at first, stood out against secession; the following extracts from a speech made in Georgia immediately after the Presidential election will indicate his position at that time:

“Let the fanatics of the North break the Constitution, if such be their fell purpose. Let the responsibility be upon them. . . . I do not anticipate that Mr Lincoln will do anything to jeopard our safety or security, whatever may be his spirit to do it; for he is bound by the constitutional checks which are thrown around him, which at this time render him powerless to do any great mischief. . . . That this government of our fathers, with all its defects, comes nearer the object of all good governments than any other on the face of the earth, is my settled conviction.” He added, somewhat feebly, in a sentence which betrays his own lack of national feeling, “*next* to the honour and glory of Georgia, the land of my birth, I hold the honour and glory of our common country.”

Lincoln had written cordially to Stephens on receiving a copy of this speech, assuring him, “as once a friend and still, I hope, not an enemy,” that the Southern people had no cause for apprehension from him.

The inaugural address of Jefferson Davis was marked by a lofty, if ill-based, religious sentiment, and in-

voked "the blessings of Providence on a just cause." It anticipated peace and the freeing of trade from obstructive tariffs, described the act of Secession as the forming "of a new alliance," and as "actuated solely by the desire to preserve our own rights and promote our own welfare." Throughout, it reveals, like the speech of Stephens, the particularism of Southern statesmen who had never realised their citizenship in a great nation.

The total population of the seven States was about one-sixth of that of the whole Union, and nearly one-half of this consisted of slaves; but their leaders counted on the indifference and divided counsels of the North, and the more or less open support of another seven millions of people in the eight slave States which still remained a part of the Union.

Meanwhile Lincoln, the President-Elect was setting out from his Western home for the long journey to the Capital which stood so near to the territories of the rebel Confederacy that it was reckoned an easy prey by the fire-eaters of the South. Washington City lay indeed over the line which separates the two sections of the American Commonwealth, and was surrounded on all sides by a slave-holding population. In the sixty years during which it had been the seat of Federal Government its political atmosphere had been dominated by Southern influences, the Executive mansion having been filled for thirty-five years by the Statesmen of Virginia, whose green hills seem both to shelter and to menace the low-lying City under them. And even of the Northern Presidents who had held office during that period, there had been, perhaps, none but John Quincy Adams

over whom some Southern influence had not exercised the master-sway.

Now therefore, when Lincoln was coming out of the North, elected wholly by Northern votes, and free from any Southern tradition, influence, or coalition, the revolutionary party in the South worked themselves into a fever of fury and of the grossest calumny and menace. The more extreme among their papers were full of references to "Lincoln, the beast," "the gorilla," "the Illinois ape," "the nigger." Lincoln did not take this talk seriously; and many have blamed the President-Elect for the attitude of cheerful optimism which he maintained in public throughout the terrible months of interregnum.

Whatever he felt, he betrayed little even to his friends. Subject to constant attack from the curious, the intriguing, the advising, he had contrived to keep both his temper and a strict, but inoffensive, silence. His opinions were now public property, written in the reports of his many speeches and in the platform of the Republican party. He had little or nothing to add. But immediately after the result of his election was known, he had written a very plain letter to one of his correspondents in which he had spoken his mind frankly on the unpleasant subject of "stock-rigging," and the noisome travesty of patriotism allied to it with which every year makes us increasingly familiar. He had said: "I am not insensible to any commercial or financial depression that may exist, but nothing is to be gained by fawning around the 'respectable scoundrels' who got it up. Let them go to work and repair the mischief of their own making, and then perhaps they will be less greedy to do the like again."

Through the anxious and harassing months between his election and inauguration, he continued his fight against the tendency to compromise with slavery which was shown by Republican leaders in Congress.<sup>1</sup> And while he proposed always to regard the Southern people as brothers of a common country, he refused to consider their title to become foreigners by secession, unless such secession should be agreed to by the whole body of States.

Not the least among the troubles of these troublous times of interregnum had been those incident on the choosing of a Cabinet. In spite of his explicit injunctions to the contrary, the managers of his nomination at Chicago had struck at least one bargain in his name—purchasing the votes of one of his rivals by the promise of an important cabinet office. This greatly hampered his movements, though it would appear he refused to regard himself as absolutely bound by it. He conceived it to be essential to the success of his administration that the Cabinet should consist of such men as would bring the greatest confidence to the Government: that they should be representative of the several geographical and political sections of the Republican party; and that they should be chosen without any personal bias whatever on his own part.

From the very moment of his election he knew the men he desired to have about him, and before he left Springfield he had chosen Seward of New York

<sup>1</sup> This desire for compromise was based, in many minds—for example in that of Thurlow Weed—on the realisation of the irreparable loss that separation would entail not alone on the North, but on the South, which once outside the Union, would probably have sunk into an ultimate condition of despotism and anarchy.



to fill the principal place, that of the Secretaryship of State, a position comparable to that of our Secretary for Foreign Affairs combined with the Keepership of the Great Seal and Archives. Seward was a ready and suggestive counsellor, a little affable man with large views, full of resource but lacking in depth of thought. He has been described as a Whig, of the school of Brougham, Jeffreys, and the *Edinburgh Review*.

To Chase of Ohio, the handsomest and most impressive-looking man in the Cabinet, and the ablest among his remaining rivals, he had offered, prospectively, the equally important, though less coveted, post of Secretary of the Treasury, which was already standing empty through the treason of the late incumbent.

He was anxious to give Pennsylvania a seat, and subsequently did so, but was uneasy about the standing of her chief representative, against whom the public entertained suspicions of corruption. Missouri was to be represented by Bates, Indiana by Caleb Smith, while strenuous, but vain efforts were made to find some Southern statesman who would accept office.

When the full Cabinet was made up, six of its members, with the President, represented each of the seven Northern States whose population then exceeded a million, except Massachusetts, and she practically possessed a delegate in the member from her smaller neighbour Connecticut ; the eighth representative being chosen from Maryland, whose territories surrounded Washington on three sides, and whose interests were those of the border States—favourable to Union, and yet intimately connected with the Secession party.

The Maryland minister may therefore be regarded as representing Kentucky and even Virginia and Tennessee, a portion of whose inhabitants remained true to the national cause. Geographically considered, the Cabinet may be fairly described as representative of the Republican party, but hardly of the whole nation. From the party point of view it was even more widely representative; its members, including the President, consisted equally of ex-Whigs and ex-Democrats, ranging in their views on the abolition question from the radical Chase to so extreme a conservative as Bates, the President's legal adviser.

Lincoln's Cabinet—his "Happy Family", as he came in time to call it—was indeed as difficult a group of able men as it is easy to conceive, and his selection, probably the best he could successfully have made during the winter of 1860-1, did not prove wholly satisfactory.

Lincoln had made a pilgrimage to his father's grave and the home of his beloved step-mother, had spent a few hours with Speed in Chicago, and had generally wound up his private affairs, when, early on Monday morning, 11th February, he said farewell to Springfield in a pathetic little speech delivered from the train. Better than any other words it will continue to convey to all, as it then did to his hearers standing bare-headed in the rain, the emotion which he felt at that solemn hour, and which for a few moments threatened to prevent its utterance.

"My Friends, no one, not in my situation, can appreciate my feeling of sadness at this parting. To this place, and the kindness of these people, I owe everything. Here I have lived a quarter of a century

and have passed from a young to an old man. Here my children have been born and one is buried. I now leave, not knowing when or whether ever I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington. Without the assistance of that Divine Being Who ever attended him, I cannot succeed. With that assistance, I cannot fail. Trusting in Him Who can go with me and remain with you, and be everywhere for good, let us confidently hope that all will yet be well. To His care commending you, as I hope in your prayers you will commend me, I bid you an affectionate farewell."

It was a last farewell. It was only his dead body that returned.

The route taken by the presidential party lay through Cincinnati, where he had previously encountered Stanton, though northern Ohio and western Pennsylvania to Buffalo, and so on to New York, with frequent receptions and speeches by the way.<sup>1</sup> The whole journey, lasting some twelve days, and especially these speeches, were very trying to him. As we have seen, he was particularly anxious not to

<sup>1</sup> Walt Whitman has graphically described his first impression of the President-Elect on this journey to Washington. Whitman was in the crowd which awaited Lincoln outside the Astor House Hotel in Broadway, New York. He saw the tall figure step out of a shabby barouche, and noted how he "paused leisurely, on the side-walk," and "after a relieving stretch of arms and legs, turned round for over a minute to slowly and good humouredly scan the appearance of the vast and silent crowds." Whitman was perched on the top of an omnibus and had a good view, "especially of Mr Lincoln, his look and gait—his perfect composure and coolness—his unusual and uncouth height, his dress of complete black, stovepipe hat pushed back on the head, dark brown complexion, seamed and wrinkled yet canny-looking face, black, bushy head of hair, disproportionally long neck, and his hands held behind as he stood observing the people."—Whitman, *Complete Prose*, 302-3.

express any special views at this juncture : and his attempts to conceal his real feelings were not always felicitous. Thus, at Columbus, he had the hardihood to assure his hearers that, while himself deeply sensible of his heavy responsibility and filled with anxiety for the future, there was yet no ground for more than anxiety, "for there is nothing going wrong." In view of events which were then transpiring in the Cotton States, it can hardly be wonderful that some of the Eastern newspapers described the President-Elect as "simple Susan." Several incidents on the journey served to feed their contempt, and were of course rendered yet more ludicrous in their columns. But really it does not much matter to us now that Lincoln went in black gloves to the Opera at New York. From our present position his journey appears so clearly as the advent of a master spirit into the babel and perplexity, into the atmosphere of mere momentary expediencies and weak compromises, the poisonous miasma of political life at Washington, that we may be excused for indifference to minor matters.

And though he himself was not altogether indifferent, he was profoundly pre-occupied with thoughts of his destination. Whatever awaited him there, he was glad to be going to his post at last, and bitterly regretted the wasted months during which President Buchanan had allowed the party of Secession to perfect its sinister preparations. He was constantly urging upon the people who crowded about him at every place, the supreme facts of the hour, that the future of the Union lay in their keeping ; that he must be powerless without their support ; that, united under the Will of the Almighty, they could not fail.

Sometimes, in a single sentence, he would strike at the root of the plant, Secession. Thus at Indianapolis, he questioned that sacrosanctity of each separate State which was the central conception of Southern leaders, and especially its assumed right "to rule all which is less than itself, and ruin all which is larger than itself"; concluding Socratically, "Fellow Citizens, I am not asserting anything; I am merely asking questions for you to consider."

Sometimes, he would turn to denounce the fomenters of the present crisis, which he regarded as wholly artificial, since the South was suffering from no wrongs inflicted by the national power. At others, he would extol the principles for which Washington and the Fathers of the Revolution had fought.

This was most notable of all in his extempore address, early on the morning of Washington's birthday, in the old hall in Philadelphia where the famous Declaration had been signed. Kansas had been admitted, a free-state into the Union, the thirty-fourth star in the stars-and-stripes; and Lincoln's visit was made an occasion for raising the new flag over the ancient building. It need hardly be said that he was profoundly stirred both by memory and hope as he stood there, and spoke once again, as he had so often spoken, of that principle of universal liberty which was the birth-right of Americans. He spoke of it now as the sentiment which gave "hope to all the world for all future time. It was that which gave promise that in due time the weights would be lifted from the shoulders of all men, and that all should have an equal chance." This was for him the very essence of the nation's life; the one trust he could never surrender—which he

would rather be assassinated then and there, than surrender.<sup>1</sup>

The possibility of assassination had been brought before him by the discovery of a plot to prevent his passage through Baltimore, of which he had been informed on the previous night. That city was then a hot-bed of conspiracy ; and it became necessary for Lincoln to make the journey through it *incognito*. He travelled therefore, with only two companions, by an earlier train than that arranged, reaching the Capitol unexpectedly before daylight on Saturday the 23rd of February.

The nine days that passed before his inauguration were crowded with visitors, and full of anxiety. But at last the suspense was over. The 4th of March 1861, was a sunny spring day. Lincoln spent a busy morning putting the last touches to the Inaugural Address, written and privately printed before ever he left Springfield.<sup>2</sup> He now carefully corrected and extended it to meet the exact needs of the hour.

Seward had suggested a new paragraph for its close ; this he adopted after thoroughly assimilating its style to that of the preceding portion. And the Senate having passed a significant amendment to the Constitution, which, if accepted by the country, would have prohibited forever any Congressional interference with slavery in the States—he had briefly to refer to this and accept it in passing. There was also a letter to be written to his future Secretary of State, who

<sup>1</sup> He made two speeches on this occasion—the second and briefer referring specifically to the raising of the flag, the emblem of fraternal feeling.

<sup>2</sup> It is characteristic of his lack of method, that this precious document was, for a time, mislaid and lost on the journey.



wished at the last moment, to withdraw from his promise to fill that office, probably in view of the Democratic complexion of the Cabinet. Lincoln begged him fully to consider the public interest, and to countermand such withdrawal.

At noon, President Buchanan, driving in an open carriage, called for him at the Hotel, and they rode together along Pennsylvania Avenue to the Capitol. No one could avoid remarking the contrast presented by the two men—the old ex-diplomat almost bent double with the anxieties of a task too heavy for him and under the increasing infirmity of his seventy years, and the tall, kindly, powerful Westerner at his side.

Although the whole nation waited eagerly for the words that Lincoln was about to speak and the crowd of hearers was enormous, there was still sufficient fear of disturbance to keep away some of those who usually thronged to the Capitol hill for an inauguration. Old General Scott had planted his artillery to command the place, and had expressed his determination summarily to suppress the least signs of disaffection in a city thronged by the sympathisers with Secession.

It was indeed to an audience mainly unsympathetic that Lincoln addressed his first official words. But he had the support of his friends. He was introduced by Senator Baker, one of the oldest and dearest of them—after whom he had named the third of his boys—and when he rose awkwardly, holding a brand new hat and gold-headed stick in either hand, Douglas, his old friend and antagonist for a quarter of a century, came forward quickly to his rescue and removed the former. There are few historic acts so notable, and yet so trivial in themselves. The two

men, long separated by party aims and personal ambition, were now united in devotion to a higher cause, Douglas accepting the second place as nobly and naturally as Lincoln would have done. For a moment the former had been embarrassed by the unaccustomed splendour of his official wardrobe, but only for a moment ; the words he read clearly from his manuscript speedily filled his own attention as well as that of his hearers.

He began at once by trying to remove from the minds of those before him, those misunderstandings, which, as he believed, had rendered most of them hostile. He declared his unreserved devotion to the Constitution, and his desire, as a Republican, to maintain the balance of power, with absolute equality of treatment, as between the several sections of the nation. He was opposed to interference with the privileges of slavery ; and he was prepared to endorse a new Fugitive Slave Law.

But upon the matter of Secession he was immovable ; the Union was made for perpetuity, and could only be dissolved by revolution. The States now attempting secession were in revolt ; they still remained portions of the Union, and his duty towards them, as the servant of the American people, was unaltered. As President he felt himself bound to use such power as he had for the maintenance of the Union. He would shed no blood unless his hands were forced. He would invade no state, unless it should become necessary in order to occupy and repossess Federal property and places, and to collect revenue.

Addressing himself to those who contemplated revolt, he pointed out that their only justification for

such revolution would be the tyrannous abuse of power by the majority. Such justification was wholly absent. He proceeded to shew that the spirit of secession was a spirit of anarchy upon which no stable confederacy could ever be founded : its only possible issue was despotism. Then, briefly alluding to the Dred Scott Decision, he passed to the one great question before the country—that of the extension or restriction of slavery.

Here the argument is rendered a little obscure by its concentration. But he seems to say that Secession could not help the advocates of slavery, since it would abolish the Fugitive Slave Law, and thenceforward the Northern States would absolutely refuse to surrender to the South its escaping slaves ; while, on the other hand, neither would it further the cause of abolition, since it would be immediately followed by the renewal, in the Southern section, of the African Slave-trade, which Northern sentiment would no longer be able to prohibit.

Moreover he declared, Secession is a physical absurdity ; intercourse between North and South is equally necessary to both, and union is the only guarantee for free intercourse. If there be any serious defects in the Constitution they can be constitutionally amended by a Convention of the people's delegates. Nay, if it be the people's will that the States be separated, it is for them to act. But the President himself has no power, save that which the people have given him. " His duty is to administer the present government . . . and to transmit it, unimpaired by him, to his successor."

Then he appealed to the discontented to trust in

the "ultimate justice of the people." "Is there any better or equal hope in the world?" And if both parties in this dispute believe themselves to be right, can they not trust their cause to "the Almighty Ruler of Nations" acting through "this great tribunal of the American people." In any event "nothing valuable can be lost by taking time." And let those that are dissatisfied remember it is only through their aggression that civil war can come upon their nation, but that it must inevitably follow if they force on a conflict. Then came the famous closing passage, founded upon Seward's paragraph :

"I am loath to close. We are not enemies but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic cords of memory stretching from every battle-field and patriot-grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."

The Address ended, Lincoln took the oath administered by the aged Chief Justice Taney, principal author of the notorious Dred Scott Decision. There was a roar of saluting cannon, and the new President proceeded to his quarters in the White House.

There, as he knew very well, he was to find himself in a most difficult and anomalous situation.

Lincoln, "the Black Republican" of Illinois, offspring of a pair of "poor whites" from Kentucky, was President of the United States of America ; but a second Kentuckian of another caste, born within a year and within a few leagues of him, was described

as President of the Confederate States, and repudiated his authority.

Thus, in spite of its sincere proffer of good-will, Lincoln's Inaugural was heard as little else than an ultimatum. If it was, as it appeared to be, the word of a Man, and not merely of a party speaking-trumpet, and if Jefferson Davis was, as he proved, a man of determination also, there could be no other issue than civil war.

That war should never have broken out. It was a result of such political incompetence as the nation ought never to have permitted. The South was not goaded into rebellion by Northern aggression ; rather, one would say that the revolutionary spirit was encouraged by Northern indifference and by the weakness of the national Executive.

As has been well said, "it is possible that a higher statesmanship might have averted the war itself." But during the ten critical years since Clay's last Compromise, American Statesmanship had lacked distinction when it was most needed ; Fillmore, Pierce and Buchanan had succeeded one another as Presidents, in the merest mediocrity, and had fallen into subjection to the intrigues and determined policy of the pro-slavery party.

With Clay and Webster, had ceased the great voices of nationality, and in their place had risen the cries of powerful partisans. Douglas became the only figure of national importance ; and Douglas, able as he was, lacked the finer instincts of Statesmanship. With the disputes over the Lecompton constitution, the sectional spirit had taken possession of politics, and the North now began to become half incredulously aware of the aggression so long preparing in the

South: aggression, be it understood, not merely directed against the North, but against the nation, of whose population the northern States formed a large majority.

This is not the place in which to describe the processes which led up to the final breach. A strongly marked antagonism had, from the first, existed between the social and industrial polities of North and South. Until recently, it had been kept in check by national feeling fostered by necessity and wise statesmanship, and so it should have continued: but now, the fear of foreign aggression being forgotten and the very memory of the men of the Revolution little more than a pious legend, sectionalism was breaking loose. There seemed to be no longer any bond sufficient to hold the warring parties together; and it is unlikely that any statesmanship in the Federal Councils could at this moment have prevented war. But even war did not quite sever the bond of Union.

Union was necessary to the healthy growth of the nation reaching out West; and it was by no mere coincidence that the re-assertion of the Union should have been at last accomplished by the men from "beyond the mountains." The manufacturers of the Eastern States, and the cotton-planters of the South, might or might not be willing, in the conflict of their interests, to break the bonds of national life: but the yeoman-farmers of the West could not consent. They recognised grave faults in the typical men of either section; a lack of spirit and generosity in the Yankee, a lack both of practicality and enterprise in the Southern aristocrat; but on the other hand, they saw



in each, qualities which were essential to the national character; and they were bound to each by ties of blood and interest the others did not know.

The question at issue was, moreover, one which particularly appealed to the imagination of the Western farmer. The struggle with slavery was to decide whether the still unsettled lands were to be the inheritance of his sons and their fellows, men of toil and character, or to become the domain of the great Southern Capitalist with his army of negro dependents and his breeding farm for "black cattle." Hence the Westerner tended, by the logic of his situation, to be both a Unionist and a practical anti-slavery man; and it was the Westerner who was to be in a peculiar sense the deciding element in the contest now opening.

The interest and the sentiment of the West was thus, on the whole, enlisted against slavery and secession. And while, in a war between sections, the North was the natural foe of the South, it was the West—which had had its own quarrel with the North—which finally led the national forces to victory over the army of rebellion.

This was the more fitting because there was a sense in which the Western mind understood the true constitutional solution of the present problem more instinctively than did the minds of Northern or Southern politicians. Douglas's appeal from Congress to the people was, in so far, right; and when Lincoln laid stress upon the supreme power of the whole people to control, to maintain and to change the national policy, he struck the only solvent note in the discord of State or Federal paramountcy. The

Southern extremist claimed sovereignty for each separate State, a sovereignty which included the right of secession from the contract of federation. The Northern extremist urged that Congress, in the name of the Federal Government, alone possessed all sovereign powers. Lincoln, the representative of all that was best in the West, saw that sovereignty lay neither with the States nor with the Federal Government, but with the whole body of the American people. He saw that, in the great issue, America herself must decide. And seeing this, he was also endowed with a quality which enabled him, to an extraordinary degree, to become aware of the will of America. He has long been styled "the first American." He was certainly the statesman who, more than any other of his day, embodied the national spirit. And it was his unique sense of its purpose and conviction which enabled him, in the critical years of his Presidency, to rise above any mere slavish or literal bondage to the Constitution, in obedience to the will of the nation.

How he grew into this sense it would be difficult to explain; but there is no single quality which is more characteristic of him. I have already attempted to suggest the process of its development. It had roots in every part of his complex nature, in the mystical abysses of his emotional experience, in the almost cruel lucidity of his mental atmosphere, in the unswerving justice, directness, and simplicity of his character, in the sympathy and natural expansiveness of his heart, and in that instinct for leadership which is so easily confused with mere ambition.

The time had come when America needed a leader,

but a leader after her own heart, inspired by her own genius. After personal passion and despair, and the entrance into a sublime patience and equality of spirit ; after years of constant and direct contact with humanity in the particular, with every class and stage of development ; after years of thought upon and experience in the living problems of his nation, and the growth in him of the absolute conviction that its history was being written by the finger of God, its destiny safe in the Eternal Purpose, and the will of the Almighty in its heart—in the fulness of time, Abraham Lincoln, having first been prepared, was now called to guide America in her hour of crisis.

While he accepted the responsibility almost eagerly, he was bowed down under its weight. Darker and darker prospects opened out before him. At length he saw approaching with inevitable steps to greet him the two spectres of Dissolution and Civil War. It was his hour of agony : he struggled against such a destiny. As he said to a friend with the daring of a child-like simplicity, "I have read, upon my knees, the story of Gethsemane, where the Son of God prayed in vain that the cup of bitterness might pass from Him. I am in the garden of Gethsemane now. . . ." <sup>1</sup> All through his presidency that cup was at his lips—all through the four succeeding years he was engaged in a struggle, a prayer, which was the concentration of his whole being. For the choice was being thrust continually before him, Dissolution or the continuance of war.

This sustained labour of soul was doubtless deepen-

<sup>1</sup> The expression "Son of God" in this reminiscence of Lincoln cannot be used in defining his theological position.

ing his sense of the national will and destiny to the very end.

At the same time, it should be clearly stated, that while this sense may rightly be termed mystical, and is beyond adequate analysis, it had become his through the most assiduous and persistent study of the people. Thus, by the time he came to the Presidency, Lincoln was possessed of an intuitive knowledge of the popular mind: we may surmise that he knew instinctively how the body of the people would act upon any large occasion. He saw and felt the main set of the current and ignored the lesser eddies and back-runs. And he continued to keep himself constantly informed from every side of the progress of events, talked with men of every standpoint, and watched for every evidence of public feeling.

He was specially anxious thoroughly to understand the position of those who opposed him. The whole great drama of the national life was for him not wholly dissimilar to his familiar environment in the Court-house. He was "trying the case" before the great jury of the people, absolutely confident that if he could state it to them as it truly was, they would bring in the right verdict. He knew them, and how to appeal to them, not as a demagogue, but as it were the voice of their own enlightened judgment. He could quicken in them that sense of duty and of destiny which, once it possessed them, would prove itself invincible.

And here, in passing, we may note the inevitable limitation which this attitude set upon his actions. The man who must continually stand aside from his own executive acts, in order to explain or to convince,

is rendered by so much the less effective in purely executive work. Simply as a war-president and the head of a great army, a man who could have explained less might have effected more, and more speedily. But Lincoln recognised—and we also must recognise—that his power was wholly a delegated power. If he was to save the Union, it could only be by arousing that in the people which would triumph over the subtlety and determination of Secession, and the treasonable indifference of self-interest and self-complacency.

Hence, his power lay in his winged words to the people: he was an orator, a poet, shooting his words straight to the mark. He was a poet, but he was a man in such straits, in such tremendous earnest, that he used every iota of every force and element in his own nature and in his knowledge of men, in the most effective way he could, to his great end. Throughout these years he was a man entirely dominated by a purpose—a purpose which integrated and perfected his character.

But it must not be supposed that all this was evident to the men with whom he came most frequently in contact. He was more than ever a riddle to the wiser among them, more than ever a kindly simpleton or merry-andrew to the less wise and more self-confident. Indeed, it was only too easy to mistake his real quality, and to lay undue emphasis on its more superficial aspects. Often it is the more trivial incidents in his story which cling the longest in one's memory.

Several of these had already occurred in the journey from Springfield, to the confusion of multitudes of his

severe and serious supporters, especially in the Eastern States. He had joked his admirers on his own personal appearance. He had begun to cultivate some stubbly whiskers on the demand of a little girl who had written to suggest that they would be an improvement. And when he found her awaiting him *en route*, he had kissed her paternally, and exhibited his concessions to her childish and perhaps impertinent interest.

But over and beyond all such incidents—and they might be multiplied indefinitely—the root of his offending lay in his insatiable passion for the ridiculous. As someone has suggested, he would stoop to pick his favourite pearl of laughter out of any muck heap.

He needed laughter, and gave himself up to it. It seemed to bring relief to his whole over-wrought body and soul. Also, he needed tears : and these two needs were almost constant in the hard years through which we have now to follow him. To the minds of some at least of his new companions, sharers in his great national task, they ill became a statesman. But, for better or worse, such was the man chosen to disentangle the confused threads of American destiny.

In order that we may at this point more fully appreciate the impression which he made upon his visitors at the commencement of his official career, I may here summarise the vigorous personal descriptions written by several of them.

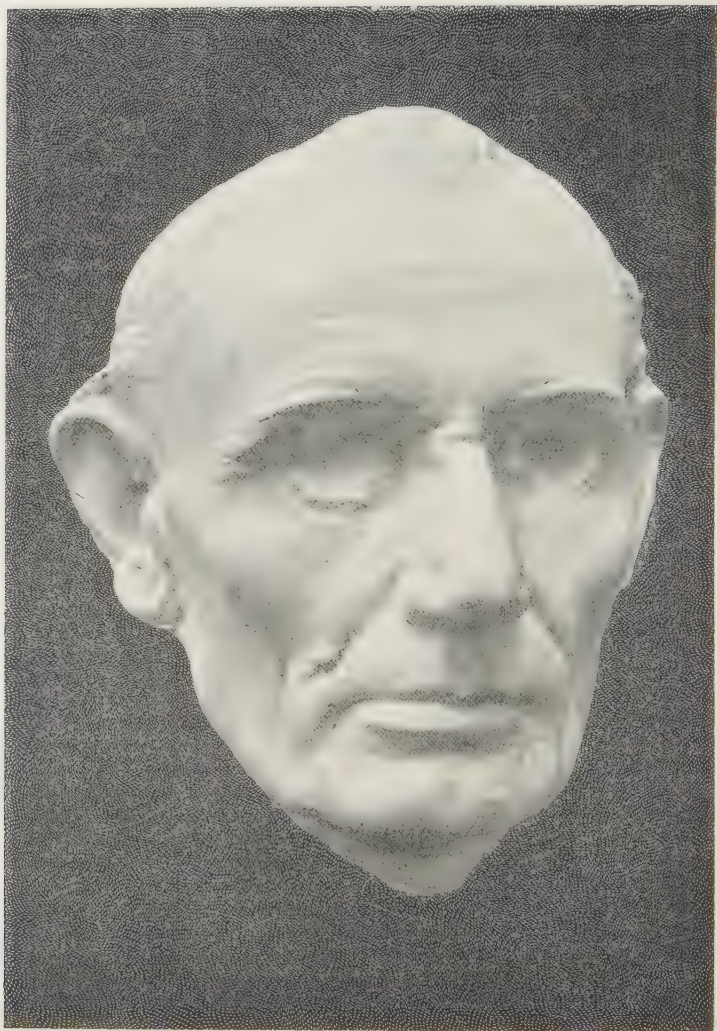
English journalists, coming to Washington, found Lincoln not so much homely in appearance, as positively grotesque and ungainly. He seemed to them the actual model from which their national stock caricatures of Brother Jonathan had been drawn. This



note of awkwardness was emphasized by the official conditions under which they saw him at some public audience, when he was painfully conscious of his own peculiarities. No one knows how much Lincoln suffered both from his clothes and from critical public inspection on these occasions. He knew that to his visitors he was a ridiculous looking President, with his abnormally big hands swinging at the end of arms, long out of proportion, and feet which were correspondingly uncompromising. The apparent size of his extremities was further increased by his boots and gloves which were always too large. At first sight he seemed to be all arms and legs. His thin stooping body was covered by a very uncomfortable, creased and conscious suit of black, which could never really adjust itself to the corners of his bony frame; while, out of doors, his great height was augmented by the inevitable top-hat. He wore an old one covered with crape.

But it was the head and face which most astonished his visitors. It seemed small to them, perched on the summit of that extraordinary powerful frame, and surrounded by dark bristling hair, like an egg in a magpie's nest. Yet small though it seemed, all its ill-assorted individual features were large, from the ears that pushed out from their dark Republican thatch, to the nose which projected so prominently, with a remarkable air of alertness, originality, force, and independence, from his face. Largest of all, the "straggling" mouth, mobile and powerful, alike for laughter and command, and for whatever the strange spirit of the man might choose to utter. But it was the eyes, deep set under jutting brows, that gave his





LIFE-MASK OF LINCOLN (1860).

face that unforgettable expression so difficult to analyse, which belonged to his very soul. They were the eyes of a seer, of a man who was not to be deceived by the passing show, because he beheld the powers and principles that move behind it, and they were the eyes of a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. For the rest, his jaw was long and square, and his chin very firm, his forehead ran back and was somewhat narrow but high, his cheeks were thin and creased over their prominent cheek-bones, with a noticeable mole above the right-hand corner of the mouth near the base of one of the strongly marked furrows, and the whole face was bronzed and its surface scarred in all directions as though eaten "by vitriol."

The upper lip was always clean shaven. The beard and whiskers being newly grown were at this time very patchy and irregular; while he had many a joke against his ungovernable head of hair. "It had a way of getting up as far as possible in the world," he said; and he used to tell with relish how, after his nomination, he heard a boy shouting his portrait through the streets, adding, "will look better when he has had his hair combed."

Yet even on such public occasions, when Lincoln was least at home with himself, the visitor could not be blind to the moral strength, and inherent spiritual dignity of the man who presented so awkward a figure. When he smiled, his whole face became suffused with the attractive beauty of his inner nature; in many little ways he revealed even to strangers that sympathetic kindness of heart which is the true good-breeding; and when he told a story there came a gleam and sparkle of humour into his eyes, as he rubbed his

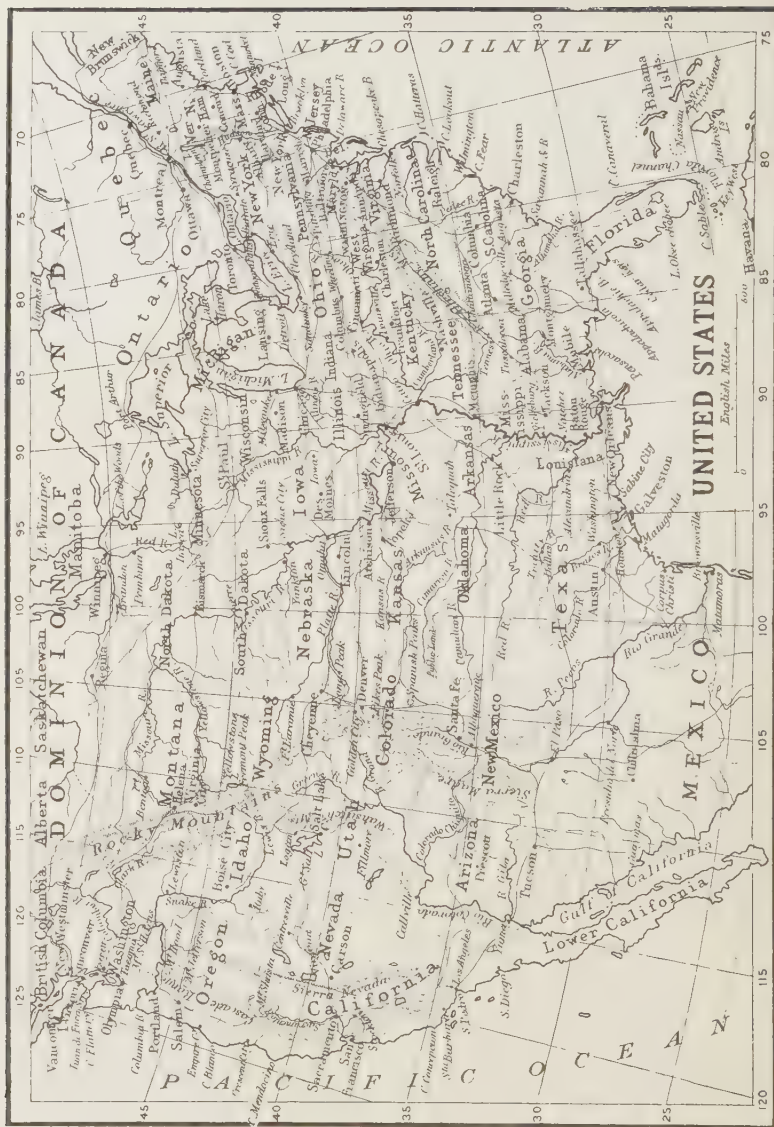
hand down his long thigh, and chuckled over his own fun.

When he was engrossed in serious conversation, he forgot all that nervous ungainliness of which we have heard so much. His attitude became instead, one of unstudied dignity without any hint of self-consciousness. The same loss of awkwardness was noticeable after the first few sentences of his public utterances. In the act of expressing his convictions he sloughed off everything in his appearance which detracted from his manhood and mastery, and revealed himself as worthy of the truths he uttered and the great office entrusted to him.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix D.







## Chapter X

# The Task

Seward and Lincoln—Sumter—Peril of Washington—Lincoln's War Task—His Policy—First Message to Congress—M'Clellan—Frémont—The Trent Affair—Second Message—Lincoln's Attitude toward the War.

THE ceremony of inauguration being over, the new President's labours began in earnest. He had not only to rearrange and repair the somewhat dilapidated structure of the Government, he had himself to deal with a rebellion already formidable.

His first task was to complete his cabinet-making. Seward honourably reconsidered his withdrawal in the light of the public service, and on the 5th March all the nominations were sent to the Senate and confirmed. Then came the prolonged and indescribably tedious and exasperating labour of filling the other Public Offices, from foreign embassies to hundreds of country post-masterships, almost every case being contested by the friends and enemies of the applicants with a minimum of patriotism and a maximum of far-reaching political entanglements. Fortunately Lincoln was a politician in the narrower, as well as in the broader, sense of the word. Disaffection and treason, together with the claims of his own party, compelled him to change, more completely than any of his predecessors, the personnel of the Government, down to its smallest

offices. He used his patronage, now and henceforward, in such a manner as to solidify the party of the Union. He seems to have achieved his task by means of a certain half-amused detachment.<sup>1</sup> He consulted every one concerned in an appointment, let everything that would do so settle itself, within certain conditions, and remembered that while he was, in his own words, "letting rooms in one end of his house," a fire was burning in the other, which he was so busy he could not stop to put out. The grotesqueness of the situation appealed vividly to the President.

For from the beginning of his Presidency the country was really in a state of war, though formal hostilities had not yet begun. The critical point was, appropriately enough, in South Carolina, always the seat of disaffection to the Federal Power. Here the national fort of Sumter, in the throat of Charleston Harbour, was being blockaded and menaced by the rebels on every side. Already, all but two of the other fortresses, besides most of the Federal property and materials, situated in the seceding States, had been seized or handed over by their commanders.

Buchanan had attempted and then abandoned the relief of Sumter. On the day after his inauguration, Lincoln was startled by the news that its commander, Anderson, his old major in the Black Hawk War, could not hold the fort more than four weeks, unless he was relieved.

While General Scott, as head of the army, assured

<sup>1</sup> Dr C. R. Fish, *Civil Service and Patronage*. Of course, there were many more applicants than posts. Of disappointed petitioners, and those whom he could not satisfy, Lincoln said quaintly, "There are too many pigs for the tits."

him such relief was impossible within as many months, and the great majority of his cabinet declared that to attempt its relief at all would be inadvisable, Lincoln himself was explicitly pledged by his own words in the Inaugural, in so far as he had power, to hold the fortress. But Seward, his Secretary of State, favoured evacuation in order to avoid a civil war, and he fully expected to have his way.

On 1st April, however, he began to discover with what kind of a President he was dealing. He wrote out and submitted a paper of "Thoughts for the President's consideration." Thus far, he had been unable to discern any real policy behind the actions of the Executive; but supposed that this was due to the pressure of the details of patronage. Now, he urged, it is time we decide on a clear policy; and, supposing that the President needed such an one, he proceeded to outline his own.

"My system," he wrote, "is built upon this idea as a ruling one, viz., that we must change the question before the public from one upon Slavery, or about Slavery, for a question upon Union or Disunion; in other words, from what would be regarded as a party question to one of patriotism. . . ." As Sumter seemed to him to raise the former issue, he would abandon Sumter; but forthwith would blockade the Southern ports, and maintain every other federal fort and possession in the South. Then he would pursue a determined and even aggressive foreign policy, demanding immediate explanations from European Powers, and stirring up a spirit of independence in Canada, Mexico, and Central America, with a view to war with France and Spain. But the main matter

was, a policy, and its "energetic prosecution" by some one person. Seward indicated that he was prepared for this responsibility, if it should devolve on him.

The paper was, in effect, a slightly condescending proffer of assistance to a President who was supposed to be obviously incapable of filling the position into which an ironic destiny had pushed him. You are doing as well as one could expect, under your difficult circumstances; but this, my dear fellow, is a great crisis in our history. We need a MAN. Do you not think you had better ask me to help you, and to step into your place in order to transact this business?

Lincoln's reply set his Secretary right; and his Secretary was at once too sagacious a man to repeat his indiscretion, and too earnestly eager to serve his country in its peril to resent his correction.

The President began by pointing to the Inaugural as the clear statement of his policy, and reminded Seward that as far as the South was concerned it coincided, save in the matter of Sumter, with Seward's own. He alluded to, but did not discuss Seward's basis of policy, and his proposals towards foreign powers. But, quoting his closing proposals, he remarked upon Seward's dictum that the business of prosecuting the policy must be done by one person—"If this must be done, I must do it. When a general line of policy is adopted, I apprehend there is no danger of its being changed without good reason, or continuing to be a subject of unnecessary debate; still, upon points arising in its progress I wish, and suppose I am entitled to have, the advice of all the Cabinet."

Seward, when he might have remained a dangerous



rival and centre of disaffection, had loyally supported Lincoln's candidature for the Presidency as soon as the party had chosen the Illinoisian instead of the New Yorker; and now again, he promptly withdrew from a false position and gave the man he had misunderstood his faithful and invaluable aid. Two months later he wrote generously, in a letter to his wife: "The President is the best of us."

Lincoln, on his side, maintained his very high opinion of Seward. There can be no doubt that he was practically essential to the Cabinet, and, failing Sumner, perhaps the only man who could then have adequately filled his office. Of his own part Lincoln said to his wife: "The only ruler I have is my conscience, following God in it."

Lincoln had corrected Seward's blunder only to commit another of his own. Although it was only a matter of detail, probably arising from his confusion of the similar names of two vessels selected for the relief of Forts Sumter and Pickens, it was largely responsible for the fall of the former on 13th April after thirty hours' bombardment. It serves as an illustration of his occasional lack of accuracy in detail, and his habitual lack of method. But the fall of the fortress consequent upon this second failure to relieve the garrisons did not seriously affect the fortunes of the war. Jefferson Davis had apparently "taken the first trick," but Lincoln's real purpose was achieved when it became absolutely clear to the Northern people that Secession really intended an armed assault upon the life of the nation.

The fall of Sumter was perhaps the result of the President's mistake, or of his failure to prosecute a



determined policy, but it brought about a new and desirable situation. It united the Northern States for the first time, and it brought Douglas immediately to the White House, with a whole-hearted offer of assistance in maintaining the Union against aggression, an offer which he made good until his death, two months later.

The continual talk of compromise and of concession ceased as though by magic. The people of the North were roused at last, and they hastened to give to the President that power which hitherto he had lacked. While they delayed he could do nothing but wait upon occasion and push forward his preparations; but now, when he issued his proclamation convening Congress and calling for 75,000 militia, in order, as he explained, to suppress certain powerful combinations obstructing the execution of the Federal laws in seven of the States, he received an overwhelming response from the North. Had he called for half a million men it would have responded; but such a call would have alarmed the hesitating Border States.

Washington was, nevertheless, in great peril; a peril increased when, on the 19th, a Massachusetts regiment, making its way to the capital, was set upon by the roughs of Baltimore, had to fight its way through the city, and was badly handled. The regiment reached Washington, but it left Baltimore behind it in a state of fierce exasperation, which, for nearly a week, prevented the passage of any further troops.

That was a week of the intensest anxiety. Many of the highest officers in the military service had resigned their commissions and joined the rebellion. Virginia had seceded, and placed at the head of her

troops, Robert Lee, at that time the ablest soldier in the country, who had, a few days before, been offered the command of the Federal Army. The great naval yard at Gosport had to be abandoned, while the arsenal at Harper's Ferry seemed to be falling into the hands of the rebels. The wires to the North were cut, the air was full of tidings of aggression and the rumour of Southern armies marching on Washington. In the rear, Maryland and Baltimore were for a week in the hands of Secessionists, and in the meanwhile, the forces available in the capital itself were entirely inadequate to withstand the expected assault.

Lincoln had faith in the people, and on the whole maintained his composure and an air of freshness and vigour. But he felt the tension acutely, and even his patience was sorely tried. "I begin to believe there is no North," he once said bitterly. And when he learnt that there was a New York regiment within forty miles of the Capitol, and still the mysterious silence and delay continued day after day, "Why don't they come? Why don't they come?" he cried, as he paced up and down his room. The relief was great when at last the troops arrived, and Washington's safety was insured. The President's combination of "firmness, reasonableness, and patience," as Mr Morse observes, brought Maryland safely through her critical hours, and by the middle of May had saved her to the Union.

The same influence was successful also, though after a much longer exercise of patience, in Kentucky, the President's own native State, the home of his wife and of his friend, Joshua Speed. After Virginia, she was the most powerful and populous of the slave-states,

and bordering as she did on Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio, Lincoln regarded her as the geographical key to the whole political problem. It was perhaps the greatest triumph of his diplomacy that in spite of all their efforts, the Secessionists were unable to separate her from the Union. On the other hand, the loss of Virginia was a terrible blow to the national cause. The Old Dominion had not only been the acknowledged home of American Statesmanship, of Washington, Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe; its green hills dominated the Capitol; and now for months to come the President was to see some flag of the Confederacy bidding him defiance from their crest. But if Virginia seceded, her Western counties repudiated her action, and were presently admitted to the Union as a separate State; while beyond the Mississippi, a majority of the people of Missouri remained loyal, and succeeded in saving their State, in spite of the treachery of its officials.

But the Confederacy grew apace. It had been joined by all the States south of the Missouri line, as well as by Virginia, which lies north of it.

Over and above his normal duties, the President's war-task was, in the first place, to prevent any further accessions to the Confederacy: in the second, while avoiding foreign complications which should lead to war, to prevent the recognition by Europe of the Seceding States as a separate government, for which purpose it was essential that he should blockade their coasts; and thirdly, gradually to re-assert the Federal power throughout their area. The first part of his task claimed his continual care through the first two years of the war. The second, remained critical till

the battle of Gettysburg. The third, of course, continued till the close of the conflict, and beyond it.

Lincoln's administration, if it had to blockade three thousand miles of coast honeycombed by lagoons, required not the three available vessels which they found at hand, but a great and powerful fleet, which they had forthwith to purchase or construct ; and for the fencing-in and gradual suppression of the revolt, a great army had to be created to augment the garrison of sixteen thousand men scattered all over the continent, watching the Indians and the frontier lines. The Treasury was empty ; most of the naval yards and arsenals were either depleted by the treachery of the late Secretary of War, or already in rebel hands. The only materials which the Government found available were undisciplined men, enthusiasm, and the natural resources of the country : and after a necessary interval of preparation these were duly and successfully applied to the task.

Of the blunders and disastrous reverses ; of the failures of measures and of men ; of the public impatience and misunderstanding, the noisy criticisms of friend and foe ; of the constant peril of a European intervention which would transform the suppression of a rebellion into a war of conquest—of these things it is not the purpose of this volume specifically to speak, but only of the part which was played in them by Abraham Lincoln. It must leave, on one side, the work of Chase, who re-organised the national finances, and of the Secretaries of War and of the Navy with their tremendous tasks, in order to focus attention upon the man whose part it was not only to co-ordinate their labours and reconcile their dissensions, but to

stand alone between them and the impatient people of America, and the unsympathetic Governments of Europe; the man who, while seeming only to wait upon occasion, yet had a policy, and did not propose to delegate his responsibility to another.

Whatever Lincoln's errors—and they were the errors of a civilian not of a military expert—his policy was a simple and honest one. It was founded on his conviction that the cause of Union was the cause of Liberty throughout the world; that Democracy with its free institutions was now being tried in the fire. The people needed but to see that, in order to recognise that the cause was worthy of their entire devotion. Once aroused, their devotion must be sustained and rightly directed, lest it should waste itself in vain. He knew the North could and must triumph if thoroughly aroused, and rightly led; equal in quality, they were greater in number, and, as it seemed clear to him, they had the more enduring purpose, the higher cause. By these things they must triumph, unless indeed they were opposed by European interference.

Seward did not fully grasp that peril, indeed he probably clung to his first belief, won in the school of Henry Clay, that a foreign war would unite North and South as could nothing else. But Lincoln knew that the question at issue between the States had now to be settled, not evaded, and that it could only be settled by themselves.

There was another aspect of the situation which probably caused the President exceptional anxiety. It was impossible that he should not, in seeking to preserve the Union by force, overstep the acknowledged limits of constitutional action, and lay himself con-

tinually open to the adverse criticism not only of conscientious men, but of all who secretly sympathised with the rebellion.

Now Lincoln was particularly sensitive on this matter : he had made his stand on the Constitution because he regarded it as the most perfect expression of the spirit and principles of American politics. He wished to be judged by it. But already in April, he was suspending the writ of *habeas corpus*, and thus bringing himself into conflict with the Chief Justice and with an influential body of public opinion.

Yet he rightly regarded his despotic action as strictly constitutional, and so argued it in his first Message to Congress, which assembled in Special Session on Independence Day, 4th July. There were men in the Cabinet, like Chase, and many outside it, who would have applauded the most masterful exhibition of determination on the part of the President ; men who were crying out for a General Jackson to stamp upon Secession. But Lincoln, though he had it in him to be masterful, knew that his conduct must be ruled otherwise. He took Congress and the people into his confidence—were they not his jury whom he had to persuade?—and laboured fully to justify his action in order to win their assent.

In his Message he gave his reasons for attempting to relieve Sumter ; and clearly stated his case as against Jefferson Davis, that by the action of the latter the Republic had been compelled to repulse force with force, in order to prove to all men whether a Constitutional Republic or Democracy could maintain its integrity against domestic foes. " Must a Government, of necessity, be too strong for the



liberties of its own people, or too weak to maintain its own existence?"

To the suspension of the writ of *habeas corpus* he referred in this succinct question: "Are all the laws but one to go unexecuted, and the Government itself [to] go to pieces, lest that one be violated?"—and then showed that the Constitution itself provided for the suspension of the writ by the President in precisely such circumstances as then obtained.

Turning to the whole question of secession, he declared that the word itself was a sophism with which to support falsehood. The separate States could only exist as States of the Union, within which alone they had liberty and independence. They were attempting to cover their repudiation of common responsibilities under this cloak of respectability. From these responsibilities their revolt could not excuse them. They could not, of their own motion, cancel that to which they had agreed in perpetuity.

He appealed to the plain people—whom the rebels did not greatly affect, preferring to deal with Legislatures and official persons—to realise that this was their struggle: "a struggle for maintaining in the world that form and substance of government whose leading object is to elevate the condition of men." . . . He appealed to them to carry their great experiment through this, its final stage, and to uphold by force, since it was necessary, the decision of the ballot-boxes.

Of his own personal part and duty he said that it was clearly defined for him by the platform upon which he had been chosen, and the oath which he had taken. "In full view of his great responsibility he

has so far done what he has deemed his duty. You will now, according to your own judgment, perform yours. He sincerely hopes that your views and your actions may so accord with his, as to assure all faithful citizens who have been disturbed in their rights of a certain and speedy restoration to them, under the Constitution and the laws. And having thus chosen our course, without guile and with pure purpose, let us renew our trust in God, and go forward without fear and with manly hearts."

The spirit of equanimity which breathes through the whole message was sorely needed. The exultant optimism of the North, which had followed on the President's call for volunteers, had been irritated into exasperation by the long delays, uncertainties, and petty reverses of the early summer. The militiamen had only been called out for three months, and their time was nearly ended; whether they were ready or no, it became a political necessity that they should fight a battle.

The place also was decided by political, rather than by military, exigency. The Confederate Congress had been convened to meet at Richmond, only a hundred miles to the south of Washington, on the 20th of July, and public feeling demanded that at least an attempt should be made to prevent such a meeting. In the face of General Scott's opposition, the attempt was made, and ended after a partial victory, in the severe repulse of Bull Run, or Manassas, which hurled the panic-stricken Northern militia back upon the Capital.

The reverses of Sumter and Bull Run, followed from month to month by others, served to steady Northern

feeling. The only notable Federal successes of the campaign thus far had been won in West Virginia by George M'Clellan, and now Lincoln called him to Washington, and gave him command of the Army operating in Virginia. It was the most popular appointment possible, and this "Young Napoleon," as his admirers dubbed him, was soon after raised to the position vacated by old General Scott, while his friend Edwin Stanton replaced Cameron as Secretary of War.

M'Clellan was 34, and had been Chief Engineer of the Illinois Central Railroad, and one of Douglas's supporters in the Senatorial Contest of '58. Stanton and Lincoln had met in 1855 in the M'Cormick case at Cincinnati, under circumstances which might have rendered further personal associations painful to the latter.

Both men were hostile to the President, but he saw in each the qualities required ; they were loyal to the cause, and he was able to surmount the minor difficulties of personal intercourse. They seem to have been the best, perhaps the only choice possible to the President ; but it was not altogether reassuring to those who looked for a brief and effective campaign to note that neither of these men was a Republican.

M'Clellan's conception of his duties as acting general-in-chief brought him almost at once into conflict with popular opinion. Lincoln once said that M'Clellan was an admirable engineer, but with a special talent for a stationary engine. The eager enthusiasm of the Northern people was urgent for attack and aggression. But the General dreamed of tactics on a grand scale, of infinite preparation, and

then one complete and overwhelming victory before Richmond. He had the utmost contempt for political requirements, and for mere secular common-sense. Moreover, he entirely misconstrued the attitude of the President, who never stood on ceremony with his younger associates, and frequently called upon him at his quarters to ask for information. M'Clellan, who was possessed by all accounts of a most attractive personality, grew, unfortunately, to regard himself, as Seward had done before him, as the only possible saviour of an unhappy country fallen into the hands of incapables. But he created, and drilled the Army of the Potomac, and held its confidence till it was ready for the hand of a man of greater determination, a man whose name was now beginning to be whispered in the West, Ulysses S. Grant, commander of a regiment in Illinois.

The principal figure in the West all through the autumn of 1861 was however that Captain, now General Frémont, who had been first Republican candidate for the Presidency. While he did not prove an efficient general, he endeared himself to the radical wing of the anti-slavery party by a military proclamation of emancipation.

This unauthorised political act spread consternation through the border States, and was promptly cancelled by the President whose eyes were at this time, as we have seen, focussed upon Kentucky. For this Lincoln was taken severely to task by many of his supporters. He was said by some to be jealous of the former leader of the Republican party, and by others was described as Mr Feeble-Mind combining with Mr Ready-to-Halt, against Mr Greatheart. In short the

vociferous class of politicians in the North took a wholly sectional view of the situation, and seemed incapable of understanding its national political significance. In reply, Lincoln pointed out that it was beyond the power of the President or of any of his Generals to dictate permanent conditions either of emancipation or confiscation, since martial law could only hold good while the emergency which called it into action continued. He begged his friends to give up their restless reaching after new positions, and to hold fast the Republican faith, as already set forth.

By this action Lincoln doubtless saved Kentucky,—and, as he believed Missouri and Maryland to boot, with the Capitol itself. But he deeply offended the Abolitionists, some of whom began to speak openly of forcing his resignation, and of replacing him by Frémont. In their ardour, they could not appreciate the necessity of the hour which must decide the policy of the statesman. Lincoln's single task and purpose, as he had occasion to remind his critic, Horace Greeley, was to save the Union by any and the only means available; and he saw that such actions as that of Frémont were not then calculated to clear the path to national salvation.

Even less would be the distraction and entanglements of a foreign war such as he had now to elude. In November, an impetuous naval captain in the West Indies stopped the British mail-packet *Trent*, taking from her two Southern Commissioners, who had run the blockade, and were proceeding to England in the hope of obtaining European support for the Confederacy. The prisoners were carried to Boston, amid the applause of the nation, and Captain Wilkes received

the thanks of the House of Representatives. But Lincoln saw that Wilkes had put him in a false position, which might have the most serious consequences.

Already the relations with Great Britain had been severely strained, owing partly to national prejudice, the bad inheritance of two wars, partly to the economic results of the blockade of the cotton-ports and the consequent crippling of the Lancashire mills, and partly to the late President's halting attitude toward Secession. Her Majesty's Government had come too hastily to the conclusion that the Union was actually, if not formally dissolved, and had inclined to recognise the rebels too promptly as belligerents.

Let us consider the relations existing between the two countries in 1861. When the Prince of Wales had planted a tree by Washington's tomb in the autumn of the preceding year, *The Times* had described the incident as the "burying of the last faint trace of discord between us and our great brethren in the West." But now, in the space of twelve months, all seemed changed. On the 14th May 1861, just a month after the fall of Sumter, Her Majesty's Government issued a royal proclamation of neutrality as between the parties in the American War. Lincoln's blockading proclamation had then been published less than four weeks, and John Bright seems to have been justified when four years later, he spoke of this action as having been done with "unfriendly haste." But it was not in itself an unfriendly act. In the previous year, Lord John Russell had assisted the unification of Italy by a similar policy of non-intervention; and it has been argued that English vessels would not have respected the blockade of the cotton ports unless a state



of war had been promptly recognised. The recognition had, however, the serious result of giving an international status to the Southern privateers, which would otherwise have been regarded as mere pirate-vessels and outlaws.

The Queen's Proclamation was received with bitter feeling in the North, and inflamed the Anglophobia of Seward. It was fortunate for international relations throughout this year of stress, that Charles Sumner, a man of strong English sympathies and a statesman of high-standing, was chairman of the Senate's Committee on Foreign Relations. The chief cause of anxiety in the North was the fear lest England should recognise the independence of the Southern Confederacy. No clear indication of her intentions was given at the time, but the tendency of public opinion, as mirrored in the Press, seemed at first to be in favour of such action.

This was largely due to the obvious commercial advantages which would be gained by free-trade with the Cotton States. The blockade spelled a Lancashire cotton-famine; the maintenance of the Union meant the continuance of a tariff hostile to English manufactures. The temptation therefore to recognise the Confederacy was considerable, and owing to her larger commercial interests, was greater in the case of England than of any other European power. It must always be remembered in considering the action of England at this time, that the House of Commons was not then elected by any democratic suffrage, but by some 370,000 voters, and that, upon the whole, the Press only represented the views of the commercial and official classes.

Lord Palmerston, the Prime Minister, a *soi disant*

Liberal, was in reality an opportunist jingo; while John Bright, Richard Cobden, and William Edward Forster, the leaders of the Radical Party, the champions of Parliamentary Reform, and the friends of America, were outside the Cabinet. Within the Government, however, there were men like the Duke of Argyll and Mr Milner Gibson who were staunch friends of the Union Cause.

Although the articles of W. H. Russell in *The Times* were favourable to the North, that powerful journal, with the great majority of its contemporaries, supported the cause of the Confederacy. *The Daily News* and *The Spectator* were the only two prominent papers on the other side.

In July the disaster of Bull's Run had greatly discouraged many Northern sympathisers. The sophism of *The Times* that "the people of the Southern States may be wrong but they are ten millions,"<sup>1</sup> began to pass current; and even John Bright was perplexed by it. Men like Darwin and Cobden were unhappy at the prospect of a war of re-conquest; while the Foreign Secretary declared, in October, that the struggle was on the one hand for Empire, and on the other for Independence. Lincoln's actions began to be compared in hostile English journals with the *coup d'état* of Louis Napoleon.

Meanwhile the French Emperor was endeavouring to seduce Great Britain from her passive neutrality, to take the initiative in an offer of mediation, which would

<sup>1</sup> A sophism because the Secession movement was never a popular revolution, but the result of a long course of conspiracy and wire-pulling on the part of the group of autocrats who ruled the South. The attitude of *The Times* towards America made Lincoln feel "mightily like twisting the lion's tail."

obviously involve the recognition of the President's failure. While Lord John, now Earl Russell seems to have played with the idea, Palmerston, for that time, determined to keep clear of the whole prickly problem. But the garrison in Canada was considerably strengthened, and by way of rejoinder the New England States were warned by Seward to put their ports and harbours into the best possible condition for defence.

It was into this delicate political situation that the news of Wilkes' seizure of the Trent fell like a bomb.

As early as the preceding May, Seward had prepared a long dispatch to the new Minister to England, in which he had forcibly protested against the attitude of the British Government, and had indicated that any official reception of the Confederate Commissioners must be treated as an act of war. Lincoln had modified the despatch in such a manner as to eliminate from it the element of exasperation which might reduce its dignity and evoke anger on the part of Great Britain. Now, six months later, he met the indignation of Earl Russell, in the same spirit of strength and equanimity. Lord Palmerston's Ultimatum had been so far modified by Prince Albert, then upon his death-bed, that the American Government was allowed seven days for satisfactory reparation. This was further extended by the instructions of Earl Russell and the courtesy of the British Minister in Washington.

An unworthy bluster and discourtesy marked the attitude of a section of the English Press. But Lincoln had learned something from the old affair with Shields. He was not now to be dragged,

against his judgment, into a national duel. Wilkes had done wrong; he had acted wholly without authority; and the President repudiated his subordinate's action with frankness and dignity.

The British Ultimatum reached Washington on the 18th December; Lord Lyons communicated its contents to Seward on the following day, but delayed its formal presentation till the 23rd. Earl Russell had advised the British Minister that England did not want war; but the terms of his demand, for immediate restitution and apology, were stern enough to threaten it.

Lincoln called his cabinet together on Christmas morning. Sumner also attended the sitting, bringing with him urgent letters from Cobden and Bright. The latter had written of the extreme gravity of the situation, but had added, "a courageous stroke . . . may save you and us." The letters spoke of "your great country, the great hope of humanity." There was a message also from the French Government urging America to accede to Great Britain's demands. The President seems to have hesitated. He wished to have the matter decided by arbitration; but Seward and Sumner recognised that a direct answer must be returned to the British demands. After prolonged discussion their view became general, and Lincoln acted upon it. His action was accepted by the American people; and was heartily welcomed in England.

Its sobering effect even upon *The Times*, was seen in that journal's contemptuous reference to the arrival of the Southern emissaries. The English people were advised by it to take no notice of their advent. As

for the active indignation caused by their arrest—"we should have done just as much to rescue two of their own negroes."

Earl Derby, indeed, taunted America for yielding to threats of superior force ; but the whole country had shuddered at the prospect of such a war.

On the 28th of December, the flags in New York harbour and throughout the city, hung at half-mast, on receipt of the news that the Prince Consort had passed away. One of his last public acts had been the revision of Palmerston's American message ; and in him both countries lost one of the forces that made for peace. Though the Trent incident was honourably and wisely closed by Lincoln's action, it undoubtedly left a residuum of bad feeling behind it. It had increased irritation and anxiety on both sides ; and on both sides it was felt that the decision had been brought about by fear of war rather than by the moral power of justice. Lincoln probably had foreseen this when he argued for arbitration. Yet undoubtedly the decision of the Cabinet had coincided with his own.

On 3rd December Lincoln had sent his second Message to Congress. We have already noted his deliberate silence in critical matters, and though the country had been ringing with the exploits of Captain Wilkes, he had made no allusion whatever to the incident.

The Message is chiefly interesting from its statement of the President's view of the relations between Labour and Capital in America, and his evident reliance upon the intelligent support of the working people, who were giving evidence of their faith in the Administra-

tion by generous subscription to the Public Funds. The War, he urged, was a war upon the rights of the people, and intended to destroy democracy. It was an armed attempt to assert the equality, and even the superiority, of Capital over Labour in the structure of government. But the condition of Labour in the Free States made such an assertion revolutionary.

He proceeded to state emphatically that "Labour is prior to, and independent of, Capital. Capital is only the fruit of Labour, and could never have existed if Labour had not first existed. Labour is the superior of Capital, and deserves much the higher consideration. Capital has its rights, which are as worthy of protection as any other rights. Nor is it denied that there is, and probably always will be, a relation between Capital and Labour producing mutual benefits. The error is in assuming that the whole Labour of the community exists within that relation. A few men own capital, and that few avoid labour themselves, and with their capital hire or buy another few to labour for them. A large majority belong to neither class—neither work for others, nor have others working for them. . . . [Both North and South] men with their families . . . work for themselves . . . taking the whole product to themselves, and asking no favours of Capital on the one hand, nor of hired labourers or slaves on the other. . . .

"[And] many independent men everywhere in these States, a few years back in their lives, were hired labourers. The prudent, penniless beginner in the world labours for wages awhile, saves a surplus with which to buy tools or land for himself, then labours on his own account another while, and at length hires



another new beginner to help him. This is the just and generous and prosperous system which opens the way to all—gives hope to all, and consequent energy and progress and improvement of condition to all. No men living are more worthy to be trusted than those who toil up from poverty—none less inclined to take or touch aught which they have not honestly earned. Let them beware of surrendering a political power which they already possess, and which, if surrendered, will surely be used to close the door of advancement against such as they, and to fix new disabilities and burdens upon them, till all of liberty shall be lost.”

In the next paragraph, the President spoke of the rapid growth of American population: some who were living then might see its number multiplied eight times, he prophesied. The passage was based on an economic fallacy, and may serve to remind the reader that Lincoln was not really at home among statistics. Not only did he see the rate of increase in population continuing without check as the new lands filled up: he seemed to see present industrial conditions still enduring after seventy years of “progress,” after seventy years during which the new lands of the West were to be settled even more densely than were then the Atlantic States.

But Lincoln’s underlying argument is not vitiated by these striking, if inaccurate, appeals to the popular imagination; for the argument is not based upon statistics but on the fundamental final superiority of man to any of those things which he has made for his own use. In his first message to Congress he had appealed to the “plain people” to stand by the cause of popular liberty; in his second he calls upon the

"industrial classes" (by which presumably he means the "working classes") to hand on to their successors in future generations their own inheritance of economic liberty.

It is sometimes said that the whole position of Lincoln's administration was obscured by an unwarrantable ambiguity; that Northern men were urging their cause in Europe as that of negro-emancipation, but at home, as that of Union. Such ambiguity was inevitable from the nature of the case. The South was assaulting two principles, not identical until by the force of arms she made them so, and these principles, as has been several times indicated, were expressed in the abolition sentiment of the Northern section, and in the Unionism of the border States and of the West. The supporters of the two principles justified the war in their own way, and were not entirely consistent in their justification.

But Lincoln's own position was not, I think, ambiguous. His public papers clearly indicate that he knew his national duty was to maintain the Union, and that his foe was slavery, the heart of the rebellion. He did not propose to destroy that foe, but to bring it into subjection to the national will, and thus in the fine old phrase, to "carry captivity captive."

If the war of secession had succeeded—as Horace Greeley confessed that he both feared and, up till the summer of 1863, anticipated—it must, on his own subsequent shewing, have resulted in the ultimate nationalisation of slavery; for the border States would have presently joined the Confederacy, and with them, one after another of those Free States most intimately linked to them by the bonds of commerce—

their inclusion in the Confederacy being conditional on their acceptance of slavery. If this be so, it seems clear that Lincoln was right in maintaining that the cause of liberty was one with the cause of the Union, and that his immediate duty was not to destroy slavery but to maintain the Union.

Lincoln did not, however, anticipate, like Greeley, the dissolution of the Union; he was confident of the ultimate issue. But in the meantime he had cause enough for anxiety.

In mid-winter, M'Clellan fell ill of typhoid, and the President—who by his office was constituted Commander-in-chief of the Army and Navy—had now to study tactics and strategy in earnest. He attacked his problem with the same concentration of energy he had displayed at New Salem when confronted with the science of surveying, and mastered it. He took up the threads of the campaign and eagerly followed out their intricacies and entanglements, his mind always keeping the great lines clearly before it. Whatever blunders he may have made—blunders serious enough in themselves, which we must leave to the military critics—it seems certain that on these great lines his judgment was singularly sound. He certainly had advice enough to confuse the wisest of men; the President's business was everybody's business, and he was made to feel, indeed, he liked to feel it such. Moreover, Congress had created a Committee on the Conduct of the War, which was, from this time forward, continually in evidence.

Lincoln's broad military policy is suggested in a letter written in January 1862, to one of his generals in the West; "We have the greater numbers and

the enemy has the greater facility of concentrating forces upon points of collision," therefore we must menace "him with superior forces at different points at the same time," and so attack where he is weakest. And all through these winter months of military inaction and political discouragement, one truth was clear in the President's mind, and admitted of no doubt whatever. *The situation was not an impasse: there was a way through*, and the vital forces of the nation would yet find and follow it. Moreover, while he relied on "the military men" as he called them, to find the precise "points," he had a very clear idea of the necessary direction.

At the end of January, 1862, he ordered a forward movement all along the line, from the Atlantic to the Mississippi River, to take place on Washington's Birthday, and further required M'Clellan to advance towards Richmond. Neither of these orders became actually effective, but they served to reassure the popular mind, now thoroughly discouraged by the long inaction. They showed that the President at least realised the perils of delay.

When at last he yielded his own plan, and accepted the alternative of his military advisers, allowing M'Clellan to attack Richmond from the rear, Lincoln at the same time so far accepted the popular judgment passed upon his general, that, while loyally supporting him in his campaign in Virginia, he removed him from the supreme command. This he put as it were "into Commission," under Stanton, the new Secretary of War, and finally under Halleck whom he called to Washington from the West.

Domestic trouble was added to the public worry of

these months. The two younger boys who were with him in Washington fell ill, and after long days and nights of anxiety, Willie the elder, died on Thursday, the 20th of February. Perhaps no personal incident of his life since the death of Anne Rutledge had touched him so intimately.

"That blow overwhelmed me," he said afterwards, speaking of his bereavement. "It showed me my weakness, as I never had felt it before." On another occasion he said, "Did you ever dream of a lost friend, and feel that you were holding sweet communion with that friend, and yet have a sad consciousness that it was not a reality? Just so I dream of my boy Willie."

The anguish of those days had made his heart very tender. At the child's bedside he cried in perplexity, "This is the hardest trial of my life. Why is it? Why is it?" The nurse, a woman who had lost both her husband and her children, and after much tribulation had come into a great peace, told him her experience, and how she had been able to rest and abide contented in the will of God. The stricken man gratefully acknowledged this sharing of her experience with him. On the morning of the funeral he expressed his desire that others should pray for him; and added, "I will try to go to God with my sorrows."

Later he said, "I wish I had that childlike faith you speak of . . . I trust He will give it me." And he recalled his own mother's death, saying, "I remember her prayers, and they have always followed me. They have clung to me all my life."

For a time, as Thursdays returned he shut himself up, and would see no one. But a friend, a Dr Vinton,

took him severely but kindly to task for this, assuring him his son still lived, and that he did wrong to mourn as though he were dead. On such occasions, the giant bearing the burden of a nation's agony upon his Atlantean shoulders, broke down, sobbing like a child and casting himself even as a child upon the faith of his friend.

There can be no doubt that this was one of the crises in Abraham Lincoln's inner life. To those who were nearest him he seemed different after those days ; always a religious man, he had undergone some new initiation into the mysteries of the Spirit.

His bereavement was alluded to in a letter of 19th March to a Quaker correspondent, in which after apologising for the delay which it had caused in acknowledging a communication, he added, " Engaged, as I am in a great war, I fear it will be difficult for the world to understand how fully I appreciate the principles of peace inculcated in this letter and everywhere by the Society of Friends."

Was it merely the irony of Fate which had set this born peace-maker, this pathetically affectionate father, at the head of an immense army, and which was presently to snatch him away at the moment when a lasting peace was about to be proclaimed ? It is to such men as he, haters of violence, men quick to feel all the sufferings that make up a war, that a nation may best entrust her guidance in the hours of crisis. For it is they who are

" more able to endure  
As more exposed to suffering and distress ;  
Thence, also, more alive to tenderness."



## Chapter XI

### The Cause

Gradual Emancipation—M'Clellan's Fiasco—First Proposal of Proclamation—Delays—Preliminary Proclamation issued—Annual Message (1862)—Seward and Chase—Final Proclamation of Emancipation—English Friends and Critics—The Summer of '63—Gettysburg and Vicksburg—Dedication Address—Sympathy with sufferers.

THE second year of Lincoln's Presidency<sup>1</sup> opens with his recommendation to Congress of Federal grants in aid of gradual emancipation. His Message took the form of a political argument to prove that since the National Cause largely depended on the final adhesion of the Border States, that is to say of the slave-holding States which had not yet joined the rebellion, it was important that any measure which might be expected to secure that adhesion should be at once adopted. The offer of generous compensation by Congress to any State which should begin the gradual emancipation of negroes within its own limits, was surely such a measure ; for slavery was the one interest which could induce the border States to join the Confederacy.

Lincoln was, as we have seen, opposed on conviction to sudden emancipation ; for the nation as well as for the negro he saw its dangers. But he almost certainly foresaw even at this stage, that it might be forced upon him, against his will, as a measure of

<sup>1</sup> 6th March 1862.

military necessity. His duty was to preserve the Union at all costs ; and he now warned his hearers that whatever measures "may seem indispensable, or may obviously promise great efficiency towards ending the struggle must and will come," unless that struggle be soon ended.

He felt the injustice of a sudden confiscation of property, even though the ownership of that property was based upon false principles ; especially perhaps where, as in the Border States, its owners remained faithful to the cause of the Union in spite of the menaces and inducements held out to them by the Confederacy. If the war continued, it would not only be the slaves of rebels who would be emancipated. Once initiated, he knew that the work must be completed, that the Abolitionist party now rapidly increasing in strength owing to the spirit and incidents of civil war, would never rest till every slave was free, and freed by Federal action. The burden of such emancipation would fall heavily on hundreds of thousands in the Border and Southern States, who while they were involved in slavery, remained loyal. He wanted to help them in the only way possible to him : and he wanted the nation to help them.

Congress passed the desired resolution, and Lincoln laboured with the representatives of Maryland, Delaware, Kentucky, Missouri, and the loyal portion of Virginia, vainly endeavouring to obtain from them a whole-hearted support for his policy. They regarded it with a stubborn suspicion and even with hostility ; and these feelings were fully shared, though for other reasons, by many free-state representatives, and by the Abolitionists as a party. On either side it was

regarded as granting too great a concession to the other. But whatever their opposition as politicians, it seems almost incredible that the men of the Border States should have been so blind to the logic of events.

In May, General David Hunter followed Frémont's dangerous precedent, and proclaimed emancipation in the States of Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina. Again this second time, in spite of the growing chorus of Northern approval, Lincoln revoked the proclamation. He indicated in his revocation, however, that he was considering whether or no it was competent for him as President to issue such a decree himself in the future; and if it were, whether it might not be necessary for him to do so.

He again called attention to the Resolution of Congress above referred to, imploring those whom it might concern not to let slip their golden opportunity. "You cannot," he said solemnly, "you cannot, if you would, be blind to the signs of the times. I beg of you a calm and enlarged consideration of them, ranging, if it may be, far above personal and partizan politics. This proposal makes common cause for a common object, casting no reproaches upon any. It acts not the Pharisee. The change it contemplates would come gently as the dews of heaven, not rending or wrecking anything. Will you not embrace it? So much good has not been done, by one effort, in all past time, as in the providence of God it is now your high privilege to do. May the vast future not have to lament that you have neglected it."

But passionately as the President desired and sought to persuade the people to the acceptance of his

scheme, it remained Utopian. He might argue, and prove, that the purchase of every slave in every Border State would, from the merely financial point of view, be a genuine economy on military expenditure. He might propose alternative plans for the colonisation of the freed negroes in Texas, Central America or on some other continent. The people may even have been persuaded, but yet they would not accept the proposals. It would seem that they were, in part, at least, impracticable; and as though the men of both parties were under the sway of an unreasoning passion, a fatal power which was driving the nation, for better or worse, into summary abolition.

At this time, the best feeling in the Northern States was probably expressed by Mr Bancroft, the historian when in November 1861, he had written to the President: "Civil war is the instrument of Divine Providence to root out social slavery. Posterity will not be satisfied with the result unless the consequences of the War shall effect an increase of free States. This is the universal expectation and hope of men of all parties."

In reply, Lincoln had spoken of this matter as one with which he must deal "in all due caution, and with the best judgment" he could bring to it. It is noticeable that Mr Bancroft, himself, spoke not of immediate abolition, or even of the decrease of slave States, but of the increase of free States. It was not yet a question of coercion.

In Lincoln's discussion of his proposal to assist any State toward gradual emancipation, there occurs the remarkable declaration that, as long as he remained President, "Maryland had nothing to fear, either for

her institutions or her interests," in the direction of government coercion, should she refuse the present offer of aid. He seems to have resolved that if the circumstances of a prolonged war should force the President, through the demand of the popular will, to proclaim a military confiscation of slave-property to be followed by negro emancipation, he would vacate the administrative office.

The only immediate result of the discussions on the President's Message was the passage in April of an Act for the immediate emancipation of slaves in and about the Capital itself,<sup>1</sup> and the voting of a considerable sum for their colonisation in Hayti or elsewhere. The attempted colonisation proved a disastrous failure.

As Lincoln had foreseen, the military events of the summer brought the crisis nearer. In the West, New Orleans was retaken from the rebels by Farragut at the end of April. But at the beginning of July, M'Clellan's campaign against Richmond ended in retreat.

Lincoln was almost heart-broken by the disaster. "I was as nearly inconsolable as I could be, and live," he said afterwards. A visit to M'Clellan's headquarters only increased his anxiety. Instead of the success of which the North had been confident under its popular young general, he saw everywhere the evidences of military failure, and even of political disaffection. For now M'Clellan was openly emphasising his Democratic position, and lending himself to that dangerous political agitation which resulted some

<sup>1</sup> It will be remembered that Lincoln had introduced a Bill for this purpose during his term in Congress.

two years later in his presidential nomination and defeat.

M'Clellan's fiasco before Richmond forced the President once more to weigh the political arguments in favour of military emancipation. If he should offer freedom to the slaves of rebel masters, he would assuredly by this means be weakening at least the borders of rebellion ; for wherever the Federal armies lay, the negroes in adjacent districts would begin to claim liberty and protection ; and wherever the negroes left the plantations, white men must needs leave the rebel army to take their places, or the industrial resources of the Confederacy must suffer. Thus, quite apart from the possibility of actually employing negroes for purposes of war, their military emancipation would in so far tend to weaken the South.

But it would raise an outcry among the Democrats throughout the North, it would alienate the sympathies even of some of the chief leaders of the army, and it would of course seriously strain the still hesitating allegiance of the Border States, the fringes of the Union. How far might the gain on the one side be outweighed by the losses on the other ? Was the Union sentiment of the country strong enough to support such an act on grounds of military necessity ? Would a sufficient number of Democrats support it upon such grounds ? And above all, would the loyalty of the Border States, which were always the most open to rebel attack, endure what they were bound to regard with jealousy as the beginning of a universal summary emancipation ?

Such were the President's problems. Several of his Republican friends had urged him to free and arm the



negroes at once. He had refused, but had offered to resign in order that if immediately desirable it might be done.

On July 12th he made a second appeal to the Border State representatives in Congress, but as before, in vain. He warned them that if the war continued it must result in the destruction of all property in slaves ; and notified them that he was subject to a constantly increasing pressure to issue a military proclamation similar to those of Generals Frémont and Hunter, which he had revoked.

But they would not accept his policy. On the 22nd, therefore, he submitted to his Cabinet the first draft of a proclamation, intended to bring into operation an important section of the Act of Confiscation, passed a few days earlier by Congress. And it ought to be sufficient answer to his abolitionist critics, who harp upon his delays in taking any action for emancipation, that he thus seized at once upon his opportunity. The section in question proclaimed the slaves of all rebels and men guilty of treason, to be free. Lincoln proposed to give it effect on the first of January following.

He had made up his mind that he must take this step, and his Cabinet supported him in this, but on Seward's advice he postponed it for awhile, fearing that, if issued after a series of reverses, the proclamation would be regarded as a last and ineffective cry of despair.

It is interesting to observe that in spite of his own grave doubts as to the constitutionality of such a declaration, the proposed proclamation asserts that on grounds of military necessity such negroes will be

"forever" free. There is no mention here of a temporary action. Nothing less than permanent emancipation could well be offered, either as an inducement to the negro, or a menace to his master. Doubtless the President relied upon Congress to support his extra-constitutional act, and to commend to the nation such an Amendment to the Constitution as would legitimatise it. The draft of the Proclamation was returned into the President's private drawer to await a victory; and for two weary months the suspense continued.

The recent Union victories in and about New Orleans had already suggested the possibility of reconstructing Louisiana as a loyal State of the Union; and with his necessary but unpalatable proclamation waiting its time, Lincoln was eager to win back every possible area into loyal relations. He now adopted a tone of severe remonstrance with all those quasi-loyalists in Louisiana who favoured union, but yet opposed every measure against slavery. To one he wrote that while, to his political enemies, he was a patient and forgiving man, he was absolutely determined to play every card he held in his hand rather than be beaten in the great game for the Union.

To another he put the questions: "What would you do in my position? Would you drop the war where it is? Or would you prosecute it in future with elder-stalk squirts charged with rose-water? . . . Would you give up the contest leaving any available means unapplied?" And then he added, for himself, "I am in no boastful mood. I shall not do more than I can, and I shall do all I can, to save the Government, which is my sworn duty as well as my

personal inclination I shall do nothing in malice. What I deal with is too vast for malicious dealing."

To a third, he said, "This Government cannot much longer play a game in which it stakes all, and its enemies stake nothing."

He was losing patience with the mercantile spirit in the North as well as in the South, with the men whose sole thought and argument was "our trade—our interest—in danger," who cared for the flag merely as a commercial asset, and, whatever their nominal allegiance, would remain first and last "men of property."

Thus, when some New York millionaires called at the White House to demand special protection for New York harbour, Lincoln is said to have replied :

"Gentlemen, the credit of the Government is at a very low ebb ; greenbacks are not worth more than 40 or 50 cents on the dollar ; it is impossible for me, in the present condition of things to furnish you a gunboat ; and in this condition of things, if I was worth half as much as you gentlemen are represented to be, and as badly frightened as you seem to be, I would build a gunboat and give it to the Government."

His sympathy was entirely with the people who were staking all on the cause they believed to be right, for he was one of them. And he wanted the loyal slave-owner to understand that he, too, must now stake his all, and recognise that slavery was second and not first, when it came to a question of American unity.

He used the same argument, but in a different way to the hastier abolitionists.

In mid-August we find him urging colonisation

upon the negroes themselves. With perfect candour and clearness he stated what he conceived to be the situation between the races. America was at war because of the negro : the mingling of the negro and the white races seemed to be undesirable. It would be better for both that they should separate. It was true that the more intelligent negroes would stand to lose by a return to Africa : but he adjured such to make a heroic sacrifice, and to pave the way for their less fortunate fellows, by pioneering the settlement, on a large scale, of free negroes either in Liberia, or better still, in Central America. The presence of a large body of free negroes in the United States was looked upon with disfavour both in the South and North, and the immediate emigration of a number of these would remove one of the most obstinate objections to gradual emancipation.

The President's efforts toward negro colonisation continued to be unsuccessful and other events soon committed his government beyond the scope of such measures.

On August 19th, "Brother Greeley" as Lincoln called him, published in the *Tribune*, an open letter to the President demanding from him "a hearty and unequivocal obedience to the law of the land," and more especially to the sixth section of the recent Confiscation Act. The letter was a clamorous demand for the Proclamation. But Lincoln was not yet ready to produce it ; and he replied by telegraph on the 22nd, deprecating but pardoning Greeley's impatient and dictatorial tone, and defining his policy again in two sentences, "I would save the Union. I would save it the shortest way under the

Constitution." He continued, that this, and not the suppression of slavery, was his paramount object in the present struggle. But he concluded, "I have here stated my purpose according to my view of official duty ; and I intend no modification of my oft-expressed personal wish that all men everywhere could be free."

August ended with the disaster of Second Bull's Run, when General Pope, M'Clellan's successor, was defeated by General "Stonewall" Jackson, and his forces driven back on Washington, as M'Dowell's militia had been thirteen months earlier. This time the Southern Army pushed on across the Potomac into Maryland, whither it was pursued and brought to a stand at Antietam by M'Clellan, whom, against the advice of everyone, Lincoln had re-instated as the only General who could restore the shattered *morale* of the Union troops.

While M'Clellan was slowly advancing in pursuit of his foe, the President for the last time publicly defended his own delays in the matter of emancipation. He had been visited by a Committee representing the several religious bodies of Chicago, come to demand the Proclamation. If their patience was exhausted by his delays, his too was running low because of their importunity ; and his reply is salted in places with a pardonable and piquant irritation.

Ready as he was to hear the opinions of all men, he had taken about as much advice as he could swallow ; and now, when it professed to come with the authority of special revelation, he declared that men on both sides could hardly be supposed to represent the Divine Will ; and that since he himself was so

earnest to do his duty it seemed probable that Providence would communicate its purpose to him, rather than to another. But he added, "These are not the days of miracles, and I suppose it will be granted I am not to expect a direct revelation. I must study the plain physical facts of the case, ascertain what is possible, and learn what appears to be wise and right."

The President argued again before the deputation all the difficulties that beset the issue of the proclamation: the lack of unity in its favour among anti-slavery men; its possible ineffectiveness if issued—"like the Pope's bull against the Comet"—seeing that it would only affect the regions which were not yet occupied by Federal troops; the difficulty of insuring permanence of liberty to slaves liberated by military force. He felt clear now, that he had the constitutional right to issue the Proclamation for military purposes; but would it really effect those purposes? He said that he gravely doubted it. Yet he declared the matter was on his mind "by day and night more than any other. Whatever shall appear to be God's will, I will do," said he.

The deputation returned disappointed to Chicago. Nine days later, M'Clellan having defeated Lee at Antietam, Lincoln issued his proclamation.

The Cabinet Meeting in the President's plain office at the White House, held at noon on that memorable Monday, has been described by Secretary Chase. All the members attended, and Lincoln opened the sitting by reading a short but outrageous chapter<sup>1</sup> from Artemus Ward. Stanton, who was volcanically

<sup>1</sup> "High Handed Outrage at Utica."



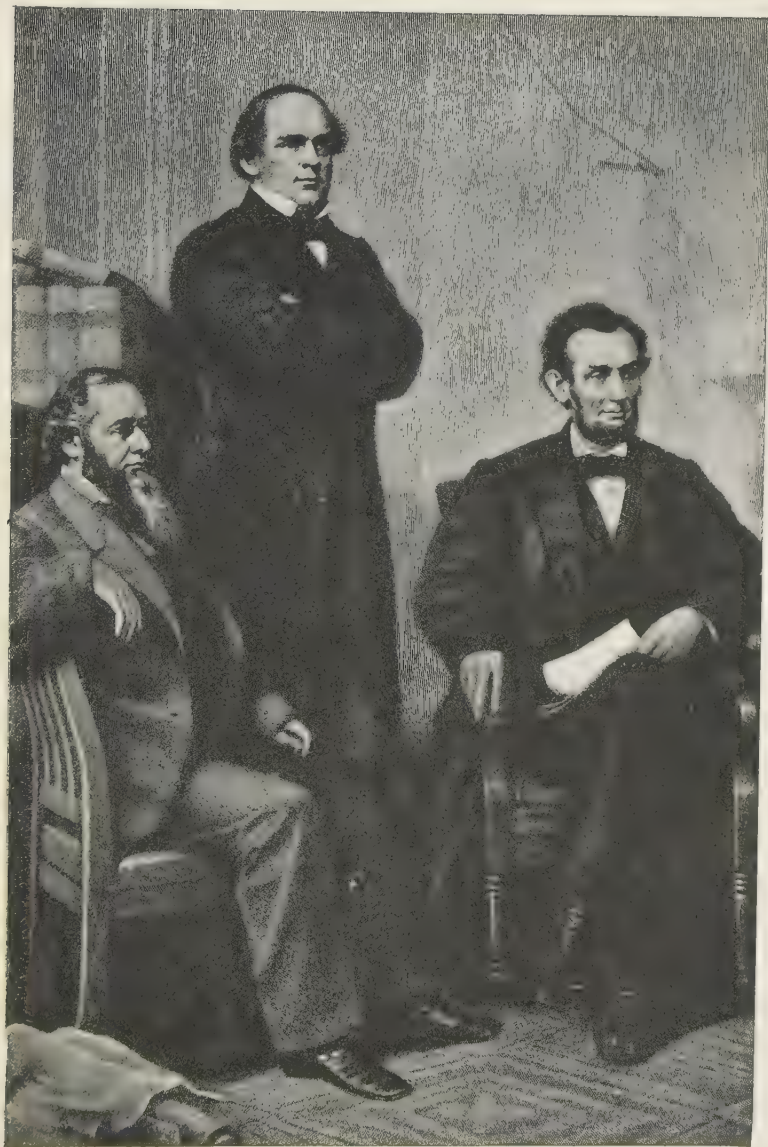
earnest, showed his disapproval at this proceeding, plainly enough.

Having had his laugh, in which the rest of his Cabinet joined, and thus having relieved his spirits of their strain, the President grew becomingly grave, and referring to their previous meeting on the same subject, and the cause for postponing the Proclamation, said that he considered the time was come at last. "When the rebel army was at Frederick, I determined," he said, "as soon as it should be driven out of Maryland to issue a proclamation of emancipation, such as I thought most likely to be useful. I said nothing to anyone; but I made the promise to myself, and"—hesitating a little—"to my Maker. The rebel army is now driven out and I am going to fulfil that promise."

He added, in conclusion, that though he realised that he was not the best possible man for the position he held, yet he was in that position, and though he had lost something of popular confidence, yet he could not put anyone into his place in whom the people had greater trust. "I am here. I must do the best I can, and bear the responsibility of taking the course which I feel I ought to take."

How grave he felt that responsibility, which he did not pretend that even his Cabinet could share, and how he shrank from accepting it, we have already seen. How nearly it brought disaster to the Republican cause, the autumn elections with their striking Democratic victories in the great Northern States tell only too plainly.<sup>1</sup> Indeed Horace Greeley

<sup>1</sup> There were however other contributing causes for these defeats, amongst which may be mentioned Stanton's arbitrary military measures taken in the President's name. See 272 n.



STANTON, CHASE, AND LINCOLN.  
*(From F. B. Carpenter's painting of the Cabinet.)*



who exclaimed, on seeing the Proclamation, "henceforth hand forever we shall be a free people," afterwards declared that it was issued at least nine months before it was justified by public opinion. There was a long succession of dark days for the President, days in which he had need of all his courage and faith.

"What I did, I did after a very full deliberation, and under a very heavy and solemn sense of responsibility," he said in answer to congratulations; adding, "I can only trust in God I have made no mistake." At the end of the month he said, in reply to an address from the Society of Friends delivered to him by a deputation at the White House, "I am glad of this interview, and glad to know that I have your sympathy and prayers. . . . In the very responsible position in which I happen to be placed, being a humble instrument in the hands of our Heavenly Father, as I am, and as we all are, to work out His great purposes, I have desired that all my works and acts may be according to His Will, and that it might be so, I have sought His aid. . . ."

And about the same time he wrote, probably as a private memorandum for his own eye alone: "The Will of God prevails. . . . In the present civil war it is quite possible that God's purpose is something different from the purpose of either party; and yet the human instrumentalities, working just as they do, are of the best adaptation to effect His purpose." He meditated much on the enigma of the situation: "by His mere great power on the minds of the now contestants," God could have brought the struggle to an end—"yet the contest proceeds."

These passages well indicate the spiritual stress of

those days, and the reliance of that great and greatly-tried personality on sources of wisdom, strength, and endurance, which lie beyond the regions of mere calculation and common-sense.

The Proclamation, made public on 22nd September, was to take effect three months later, and during those months Lincoln became more and more satisfied that he had acted rightly. Not, indeed, that the military situation was improving. M'Clellan had again to be superseded, and his successor was again overwhelmed by disaster. "I must say I need success more than I need sympathy," he had written to one of his more radical critics and supporters, a fortnight earlier.

The Proclamation had referred again to compensated emancipation ; and in December nearly half of the President's annual Message to Congress was devoted to this favourite theme. But the chief interest of this Message lies in its argument for the unity of the nation based upon geographical considerations. As the President well said, the Mississippi Basin, lying north and west of the Gulf States, is "the great body of the Republic," whereof the States east of the Alleghanies, west of the Rockies, and south of the Missouri Line are but the "marginal borders" and outlets to Europe, Asia, Africa, and South America.

The land—the permanent part of America—demanded Union ; strife and division could belong only to the passing generation of its inhabitants. The responsibility of settling this strife for ever lay upon them now. In order to bring it to a conclusion, he had issued the preliminary Proclamation, and he now proposed an Amendment to the Constitution, which, when accepted, would ratify it with the nation's seal.

The Amendment would grant aid to every State which abolished slavery before 1900 : it would not demand such abolition, but it would establish the freedom for ever of negroes liberated by the chances of war, while offering compensation to all loyal owners of such liberated slaves ; and would give Congress power to appropriate money for the foreign colonisation of free negroes.

The President pointed out that the North fully shared with the South in the responsibility for the introduction and continuance of slavery, having always unhesitatingly profited by the products of slave-labour. It was therefore fitting that it should share the cost of abolition.

For now abolition must come. America could be no longer a house divided against itself by slavery. The people must recognise this ; Lincoln plainly indicated to them the nature of the contest in which they were engaged. He endeavoured to clear the issues by an appeal to his hearers to rise above quibbling and partizanship : " In times like the present men should utter nothing for which they would not willingly be responsible through time and in eternity."

And in supporting his proposals he said : " I do not forget the gravity which should characterise a paper addressed to the Congress of the nation by the Chief Magistrate of the nation. Nor do I forget that some of you are my seniors, nor that many of you have more experience than I in the conduct of public affairs. Yet I trust that, in view of the great responsibility resting upon me, you will perceive no want of respect to yourselves in any undue earnestness I may seem



to display. . . . The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves, and then we shall save our country."

There follows an appeal to the imagination of Congress: We shall inevitably "be remembered in spite of ourselves. . . . We say we are for the Union. The world will not forget that we say this. We know how to save the Union. The world knows we do know how to save it. We—even we here—hold the power and bear the responsibility. In giving freedom to the slave, we assure freedom to the free—honourable alike in what we give and what we preserve. We shall nobly save or meanly lose the last, best hope of earth. Other means may succeed; this could not fail. The way is plain, peaceful, generous, just—a way which, if followed, the world will for ever applaud, and God must for ever bless."

December was a month full of darkness and difficulty. Following the political reverses in the autumn elections,<sup>1</sup> dissensions in the Cabinet and in the party came to a head with the resignation of Seward, forced upon him by the constant pressure of radical criticism. He had loyally upheld the President in his support of M'Clellan, against the criticism and mistrust of other members of the Cabinet; and he had openly reprobated

<sup>1</sup> Due largely to military ineffectiveness, but partly to the arbitrary orders of arrest for discouraging enlistment, etc., and the suspension of *habeas corpus* for persons so arrested, by Stanton, in the President's name and with his approval. These were regarded as, and were, the acts of a military dictator, and seemed more open to criticism than his Edict of Emancipation.

the attitude of the abolitionist party which was seeking to force the hand of the Executive. He had thus been set in more and more marked antagonism to Chase, who had not concealed his almost personal hostility, both misunderstanding and misinterpreting to his fellow-radicals the actions of Seward.

Lincoln silently considered the resignation for a few days, and then so arranged matters that he also held in his hand a resignation from Chase. "Now I can ride," he said in glee, "I have got a pumpkin in each end of my bag." Whereupon, the crisis being over, he asked his two advisers to withdraw their resignations, and they resumed their posts, with the President once more master of the situation.<sup>1</sup>

A few days earlier the Army of the Potomac had been hurled back with terrible loss from the Confederate entrenchments at Fredericksburg, Va. The General—Hooker—fell out with his officers, and Lincoln's own military adviser, Halleck, refused to decide the point at issue. Thus politically and militarily, the President was left almost in solitude, and thrown upon his own resources.

<sup>1</sup> At this time the President could not have afforded to lose the political support and personal assistance of either of his two principal Secretaries. No man had been more loyal, or continued more powerful to help or to hinder, than Seward. As much could not be said of Chase, who lacked the qualities which endeared Seward to his chief. He was without humour, and was no judge of men; but he had a power and a dignity—a quality in which Lincoln seemed deficient—which all acknowledged, and he had proved himself invaluable in the Treasury. There can be no doubt that Chase and Lincoln were antipathetic to one another. But so, it would seem, were Stanton and the President. Yet Stanton became, after Seward, his favourite in the Cabinet; while Chase, for whom he had early conceived a high admiration, withdrew to a further and further distance. Personal feeling, however, could not influence the President's action. The country needed both men, and he retained them.

The final Proclamation was issued on New Year's Day, 1863. The President received callers in the East Room, from eleven to three, a constant procession of hand-shakers. Then he escaped to perform an act which he himself regarded as the most symbolic of his life. Seward was awaiting him in the Executive Chamber, and there he set his signature at the foot of the Proclamation. "If my name ever gets into history," he said, "it will be for this act, and my whole soul is in it."

Once, as a young man, he had allowed himself to contemplate suicide as the only escape from his despair of ever associating his name with any great action for the cause of human betterment. The mood had passed, years had gone over, and now the impossible deed was being accomplished. If his hand shook as it set his name to the paper, it was not from indecision, but from a prosaic physical cause—the constant exercise of welcoming his New Year's guests.

The end indeed was not yet: to many even the beginning seemed hesitating, and wholly inadequate. As Earl Russell somewhat ungenerously declared, it appeared in the guise of an act of "vengeance on the slave-owner," and actually liberated no slaves in the regions then effectively controlled by the authority which issued it. But it was in reality a secure beginning of that succession of events which led up inevitably to the Constitutional Amendment and the final abolition of slavery: and it was a bold deed, because, as events showed, it was still in advance of public opinion.

For Lincoln's own assurance that his deed was rightly and duly done was not immediately shared by

the nation. There was still half a year of gloom and uncertainty before it became clear that the tide had turned, before the political wisdom of his edict was simultaneously justified at Gettysburg and Vicksburg.

Meanwhile Lincoln, the greatest of American Liberals, looked eagerly oversea to the Liberals of the Old World, for some recognition of his action.

The middle class in England had been trying hard to believe that the war did not after all turn upon the question of slavery. Against the arguments of Professor Cairns and John Stuart Mill it still clung to that belief. In April Mr Gladstone, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, had sophistically declared he "had no faith in the propagation of free institutions at the point of the sword." As the summer advanced, and M'Clellan's campaign before Richmond proved a failure, proposals of mediation were again discussed in the English Cabinet, and a resolution on the subject was introduced into the House of Commons, but withdrawn on the advice of Palmerston.

At this point occurred an incident even more serious than the affair of the *Trent*—the sailing from Liverpool of the privateer afterwards known as the *Alabama*. In spite of all the evidence accumulated by the American Minister, and the advice of Lord Monkswell, the decision to prevent the vessel sailing was made too late, and the delays of "the circumlocution office" served only too well the hostile purposes of certain Liverpool ship-builders. Lord Russell seems to have realised that he was to blame in the matter, and discovered angrily enough that he had been misled by his subordinates. The sailing of the *Alabama* was bitterly regretted by other members of the Cabinet—

the Duke of Argyll, Sir G. Cornwall-Lewis, and Mr Milner Gibson. It greatly embittered the feeling of suspicion which was then almost traditional between the two peoples.

This feeling was not improved by the attitude of British and American newspapers, nor by the indiscretions of British ministers.

Early in October, Mr Gladstone declared that Jefferson Davis had made a nation, and spoke with assurance of Southern success. This was regarded at the time as an avowal of Government policy, and the immediate recognition of the Southern Confederacy was consequently anticipated. But by the end of the month—partly owing perhaps to a knowledge of the tenor of Seward's instructions to the American Minister in London, but partly, as one may suppose, as a result of the preliminary Proclamation of Emancipation—the policy of intervention was abandoned, and Mr Gladstone's ingenuity was employed in explaining away his mischievous words. In later years he referred to them as to a mistake of "incredible grossness."

*The Times*—"bad times" as Lincoln called it, to distinguish it from "good times" in *The Times* of New York—received the Proclamation with infamous insinuations. It described it as an incitation to servile insurrection, and pictured the President gloating over a prospect of rapine and midnight murder. *The Saturday Review* followed in the same strain. With the perverse ingenuity of a special pleader, it characterised the Edict as "a crime."

But, on the other hand, English Radicalism, led by Cobden, Bright, and Forster, was finding a voice. On New Year's eve great public meetings to greet the

Edict were held in London and Sheffield, and a third and very notable one of six thousand Lancashire men assembled in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, proclaiming the English and Americans to be truly one people, though locally separate; speaking of slavery as the only cause of dissension between them, and urging the President to destroy it.

In acknowledging the Address from Manchester, Lincoln, after explaining that his whole purpose and duty as President had been to preserve the Republic, added, somewhat didactically, as though still excusing his action to his own conscience, "it is not always in the power of governments to enlarge or restrict the scope of moral results which follow the policies that they may deem it necessary for the public welfare from time to time to adopt." He had counted on the forbearance of nations; and he now acknowledged this message to him as, under the circumstances of distress prevailing in Lancashire through the war, "an instance of sublime Christian heroism which has not been surpassed in any age or in any country. It is indeed an energetic and reinspiring assurance of the inherent power of truth, and of the ultimate and universal triumph of justice, humanity, and freedom." And he concluded by seeing in this interchange of sentiment "an augury that, whatever else may happen, whatever misfortune may befall your country or my own, the peace and friendship which now exist between the two nations will be, as it shall be my desire to make them, perpetual."

It is curious to observe that even here Lincoln will not appeal for support to the abolition sentiment of his correspondents. He is too honest to profess



motives which were not strictly those that impelled him to action. He appeals rather to the sentiments of universal justice, humanity, and freedom, which always are the actual motive-power behind his decisions. He wrote a few days later in the same strain to "the working-men of London" in acknowledgment of another address.

At the London meeting of 29th January, held in Exeter Hall, the attendance was so great that a second room was filled, and many still remained in the street. The vast audience rose and cheered, waving hats and handkerchiefs on the mention of Lincoln's name. A similar meeting, evincing similar enthusiasm, was held the same night in Bradford; and through February and March great meetings continued to send congratulations to the President from various towns in the provinces and in Scotland. The most notable of all was that of the Trades Unions, which crowded St James's Hall on 26th March. This was of special importance, because it was not a meeting called by the Emancipation Society; but the recognition on the part of organised labour in Great Britain, of the degrading influence of slavery upon labour throughout the world. Sir W. R. Cremer, the veteran advocate of arbitration, then a working carpenter, moved one of the resolutions, and the meeting was addressed by John Stuart Mill, Professor Beesly, John Bright, and others.

The Address to President Lincoln contained this remarkable sentence, in which the real feeling of English Radicalism found expression, "Though we have felt proud of our country . . . yet have we ever turned with glowing admiration to your great Republic,

where a higher political and social freedom has been established."

The sentiment is in accordance with John Bright's dictum, "I am persuaded . . . that the more perfect the friendship that is established between the people of England and the free people of America, the more you will find your path of progress here made easy for you, and the more will social and political liberty advance amongst us."

Lincoln and Bright knew as well as did Mazzini that however governments might disagree, throughout the world the cause of the peoples was one. Walt Whitman perhaps at this very time, was inditing his "Years of the Modern" to the growing consciousness of solidarity among the nations :—

"Are all nations communing? Is there going to be but one heart to the globe?"

Is humanity forming en masse? . . ." he questioned.

But if a number of the English people sympathised with the President and recognised that it was their battle he was fighting we hardly need be reminded that many of their leaders treated him and his proclamation with frank hostility. Earl Russell, not content with his previous criticism, went so far as to declare, in February 1863, that Northern success would be calamitous to the world — a singular utterance, considering his position as Her Majesty's Foreign Secretary, and calculated to intensify the bitter feeling already entertained by the American Secretary of State. While the Prime Minister, Lord Palmerston, ridiculed the mere notion that the Union any longer existed. The Marquis of Hartington, during a visit to America, gave open evidence of his

sympathy with the Southern party. It is said that Lincoln contrived to express a good-natured contempt for his attitude by studiously addressing him as "Mr Partington."

The frank sympathy of the official classes, both in Great Britain and in France, with the Confederate cause, had serious consequences. The most disastrous was the building and equipping of privateers in English and French yards for the destruction of American commerce. We have seen how Great Britain had delayed acting upon the urgent representations of the American Minister until the notorious *Alabama* had sailed.

British responsibility for the ravages of this vessel was steadily brought before the attention of Her Majesty's Government by the American Minister, and as steadily disclaimed by Earl Russell. In the spring of 1863 three more ships of the same character were being built in Liverpool; and Forster and Bright called attention to them in the House of Commons. The builder, Mr Laird, justified his action by "patriotic" bluster, while Palmerston flippantly defended the inaction of the Government. But Earl Russell had learned his lesson, and first the *Alexandra*, and afterwards two iron-clad rams, were prevented sailing.

Meanwhile, however, the *Alabama* and the *Florida* were capturing and burning American trading vessels.

But while they and their fellows succeeded for a time in paralysing American commerce on the high-seas, it was the threat of foreign intervention which, until the summer of 1863, was the greatest danger presented by European hostility to the American nation.

Protests on one side or the other, against the attitude of Her Majesty's Government, were made from time to time in Parliament, and on 30th June, there was an interesting debate in the House of Commons on a motion urging the Government to enter into negotiations with the other great Powers to recognise the Southern Confederacy. This was on the eve of Gettysburg. The mover Mr Roebuck, an eccentric Radical, declared that the South had resisted and conquered the North, and that its prompt recognition was politically desirable since it would materially weaken the Republic. He spoiled his case, however, before the House of Commons, by his ill-advised references to a foreign sovereign, the Emperor Louis Napoleon, whom he had interviewed, and whose wishes he professed to represent.

Lord Robert Montague moved for neutrality. Mr Gladstone sympathised with both parties ; he deprecated the suggestion that our policy should be based on interested motives, but held that the North could not restore the Union by force.

On the other hand, Mr Forster well described the supporters of the Union as being not so much anti-slavery men, as men who loved the Union better than slavery, and who were therefore about to abandon the latter. But Lord Robert Cecil could only regard the North as a commercial rival, whose failure he gleefully prophesied. In reply, John Bright, himself a cotton-spinner, declared that the failure of the North would be followed by a second and very different Union on the Southern basis of slavery and aggression. The Government of the United States stood before the world as the defender of law, freedom and equality. Then, denouncing the rebellion, he implored his countrymen to "lift

nor hand nor voice in aid of the most stupendous act of guilt that history has recorded in the annals of mankind." The motion came to nothing ; news of the Union victories at Vicksburg and Gettysburg followed almost immediately, and the attitude of Great Britain remained "correct."

A great deal has been said, and said justly, against the coldness of Great Britain at this hour of America's crisis. But there has been injustice in some of the accusations levelled against the English Government, and especially against the English people. It was the English advisers of Queen Victoria who frustrated the designs of Napoleon III. for effecting the recognition of Confederacy. It is true they wavered, but it is also true that they delayed action till action became impossible.

As to the English people, and especially the people most affected by the war, the thousands of cotton operatives in the very grip and terror of famine, John Bright declared, "there has been every effort that money and malice could use to stimulate in Lancashire, amongst the suffering population, an expression of opinion in favour of the Slave States. They have not been able to get it." John Bright and the men and women of Lancashire understood the struggle, and were faithful, in spite of their personal interests, to the cause of a common Humanity.

"As for me," said the great Quaker orator in words worthy of Abraham Lincoln, "as for me, I have but this to say . . . if all other tongues are silent, mine shall speak for that policy which gives hope to the bondsmen of the South, and which tends to generous thoughts and generous words and generous

deeds, between the two great nations who speak the English language, and from their origin are alike entitled to the English name."

The talk of intervention in foreign Cabinets had been encouraged even by some Republican leaders and notably by Greeley, who seems to have been cast into the depths of despair by the Republican reverses at the November elections which followed the preliminary Proclamation. At this time Lord Lyons the British Minister, was in close relations with many of the so-called "Conservative" (Democratic) leaders in New York, and his despatch upon the subject, dated 17th November 1862, is of great interest. While these Democrats were eager for foreign intervention they were wiser than Greeley, and politic enough to see that its actual offer would produce such national indignation as must greatly strengthen the hands of the Radicals, with whom they considered that the President was at that time more and more closely indentifying himself. What they desired was such military success for the Union as might lead to an armistice, to be followed by a national convention, in which the Southern as well as the Northern States should participate, which should propose such amendments to the Constitution as would satisfy the Slavery party and re-establish the Union without really settling the points at issue.

Lord Lyons himself opined that they had little real hope of effecting this, and were ready in their hearts to purchase peace at the price of separation. But he added that if any offer of mediation were to be made by the European Powers it would be inadvisable for Great Britain to make it. In this, as in the Trent



Affair, Lyons proved himself a real, if a cautious, friend of the American nation, and a wise observer of their moods. And thus we may note how it was the attitude of the American people themselves which rendered foreign intervention impossible, just as it was their will which supported the President in his determination to continue the struggle even through its darkest hours.

These may be placed in the early summer of 1863, when the war had lasted two years, with a slow but steady narrowing of the borders of insurrection, and a tightening hold upon its coasts. General M'Clellan, while he remained at the head of the army, had received the support of the Northern Democrats. Now that he was removed and the Proclamation was in force, to the discontent of the Democrats, while a large proportion of Republicans were in the field and unable to register their votes at the State elections, the political position of the Administration became exceedingly precarious. Nor were the Radicals themselves united in its support. Chase made himself henceforward the centre for criticism and disparagement of the Administration : he had never appreciated Lincoln's worth, and was now openly seeking to supplant him in the presidency.

Military necessity, moreover, forced further unpopularity upon the Administration. Voluntary recruiting had ceased to furnish the men required for the army, and in February 1863 it became necessary to enrol and call out the national forces. A Bill for this purpose was therefore introduced into Congress, and was, of course, vehemently opposed by the Democrats, led by Richardson, of Illinois, Douglas's successor. The Bill eventually passed, and gave the President power to

call out, by draft, all able-bodied men from 20 to 45 years of age.

The greatest difficulty was met in enforcing this law, especially in the Democratic State and City of New York. Here the newly-elected Governor was hostile to the policy of the Administration, and had even rejected the personal offer of friendship and confidence made to him in generous and cordial terms by the President. He was successful in greatly increasing the difficulties of Lincoln's task during the term of his Governorship.

An even more conspicuous figure than Governor Seymour was Vallandigham, of Ohio, who in January had referred trenchantly, but cynically, to the President's labour as an attempt at "creating love by force, and developing fraternal affection by war." In May he spoke of the President as "King Lincoln," and roundly denounced him, amid the applause of a Democratic audience, at Cincinnati. Almost immediately after this, Vallandigham was arrested by the military authorities and tried for treason before a court martial. Lincoln modified the sentence, which was one of imprisonment in a Northern fortress, and ordered him to be sent South into the Confederate lines.

This was, of course, the kind of action most calculated to encourage Lincoln's critics, and indeed to justify them. It was the action of a military despot, and contrasted vividly enough with the modes of an industrial democracy. Yet the American people recognised, as did the President, that he must now exercise those distasteful and dangerous weapons which the insurrection had compelled him to take up. And they knew that the weapons were safe in his hands.

They knew, as every one familiar with his character could not fail to know, that it was one of the most ludicrous of witticisms to denounce him as "Abraham I." They were themselves impatient of the uncertainties as well as the delays of the civil courts, and while many of them distrusted Lincoln's ability, and suspected him of too soft a heart, none really doubted his honesty of purpose.

However, as he would certainly anticipate, the arrest was greeted by a storm of indignation and angry protest, to which the President replied in a public Paper. The sardonic humour of his action must have given even him greater satisfaction than the sentences in which he justified his right to arrest the "wily agitator," who by his specious arguments induced "the simple-minded soldier-boy" to desert. By sending Vallandigham South, he not only acted on his favourite principle of getting rid of political white elephants, but he made plain the logic and the treason of that worthy's position. When, in June, he was nominated, in his enforced absence, for Governor of Ohio, Vallandigham was heavily defeated by a war-democrat. A year later, he returned from exile and took considerable part in affairs, but the violent futility of his opposition only strengthened the cause of the Government. As an individual he need hardly be remembered by us, but he represented a movement to which we shall have occasion to refer again, since, after the summer of 1863, it seemed for a time to threaten real danger to the Administration.

For all these reasons it is difficult to conceive of a much more depressing situation than that which

presented itself to the President at midsummer 1863—the hour before the dawn.<sup>1</sup>

Dissension and distrust seemed everywhere to prevail in the Cabinet, among his military advisers, in the Republican party, and among the people of the Northern States. In May, the army of the Potomac had been again repulsed by Lee, who had now invaded the North, and was marching on Philadelphia. Hooker, the General in the field, and Halleck, Lincoln's adviser, thoroughly disliked and misunderstood one another, and found themselves at cross purposes on the eve of a great battle. Grant, the man of the future, the one Northern General who showed evidences of fulfilling the requirements of the hour, was still digging and doubtfully manœuvring in front of Vicksburg.

Lincoln knew the strength and weakness of Hooker, and the letter which he had written to him on his appointment to the command of the army in Virginia was full of shrewd counsel. "I have heard, in such a way as to believe it," he had written, "of your recently saying that both the army and the Government needed a dictator. Of course it was not for this, but in spite of it, that I have given you the command. Only those Generals who gain successes can set up dictators. What I now ask of you is military success, and I will risk the dictatorship. . . . Beware of rashness. Beware of rashness, but with

<sup>1</sup> It was at this time that Whitman thus described Lincoln's appearance. "I had a good view of the President last evening. He looks more careworn even than usual, his face with deep cut lines, seams, and his complexion gray, through very dark skin—a curious-looking man, very sad. I said to a lady who was looking with me, 'Who can see that man without losing all wish to be sharp upon him personally?'"—Whitman, *Wound-Dresser*, 90.

energy and sleepless vigilance go forward and give us victories."

Hooker eventually gave Lincoln the victory he asked for at Chattanooga, when he was serving under Grant ; but he was not the man to conquer Lee. And even while in pursuit of the Southern General, he himself seemed to realise this. Owing to disagreements with Halleck, he resigned, and Meade took his place.

At the opening of July came the crisis. The Northern and Southern forces<sup>1</sup> met somewhat unexpectedly near the field of Gettysburg in Southern Pennsylvania, more than fifty miles north of Washington ; and there, after an uncertain struggle of three days, Lee fell back baffled, gathered his forces together, and withdrew southward. Meade followed slowly, unable, perhaps unwilling, to force him to a final fight.

The escape of the Southern Army was dreadful to the President : it meant the unnecessary and indefinite continuance of the war. He had always believed that Lee would make a fatal mistake if he crossed the Potomac to invade the North, and that he would never return again into Virginia. He had confidently built on the belief that Meade would crush him after Gettysburg, as he had hoped M'Clellan would crush him after Antietam.

For ten days after Lee's escape, Lincoln was so angry that Meade asked to be relieved of his command. The President refused his request, and wrote generously to him. But he was troubled by doubts : was Meade really averse to a complete victory, as M'Clellan had

<sup>1</sup> That is to say, the armies under Meade and Lee respectively. Four other Union armies were concentrated farther West, in Tennessee, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Arkansas.

seemed to be? Was he, in his secret heart, afraid of crushing the rebellion, and would he be content if he might "drive the invader from our soil?" Did he, too, regard the rebellion as successful, and the Southern States as a foreign country?

Lincoln himself had been out of health; the strain was telling even on his great strength. We get a curious side-light on these days of nervous tension in a characteristic message to Mrs Lincoln, who was away with Tad<sup>1</sup>: "Think you had better put Tad's pistol away. I had an ugly dream about him."

Harrassing doubts and fears came in battalions. Immediately after Gettysburg, followed the anti-draft riots in New York, when the Metropolis was for three days in the hands of Southern sympathisers, and troops had to be hurried back from Gettysburg to quell the disturbance. The riots recalled those of two years earlier in Baltimore, and were among the ugliest signs of the times. They seem besides to have involved the death of a thousand persons. It became manifest that the "peace-party" in the North—which, as John Bright had said in the House of Commons a few days earlier, was in no true sense a peace-party—was co-operating with the Southern rebels. On the very days of the Gettysburg fight the Vice-President of the Confederacy was seeking an entrance into Washington on the pretence of discussing the possibilities of an armistice, but probably with the hope of strengthening the hands of his sympathisers in New York, Ohio, and elsewhere, by his presence.

After all deductions, however, Gettysburg was a victory; and Lincoln came to recognise it as such.

<sup>1</sup> Tad's real name was Thomas; Tad is short for tad-pole.



On the 21st July he wrote, "A few days having passed, I am now profoundly grateful for what was done, without criticism for what was not done." And Gettysburg was accompanied by even better news from Grant, who had taken the seemingly impregnable Vicksburg on the 4th of July. Lincoln thanked him in a cordial letter: ending with a generous confession of his own erroneous views as to Grant's actions, and the sentence, "I now wish to make the personal acknowledgment that you were right and I was wrong." Vicksburg was the key to the Mississippi River, and a few days later this was once more an open highway for American vessels.

After Vicksburg and Gettysburg, though there was still cause enough for anxiety, the steadier minds began to feel assured of ultimate success. And, realising the extraordinary perils through which the ship had passed, they were thankful that it still rode "safe and sound at all." Like Whitman at this time,<sup>1</sup> they saw that "it has been a big thing to have just kept the United States from being thrown down and having its throat cut"; and in his quaint colloquial phrase they were finally making up their minds "that Mr Lincoln has done as good as a human man could do."

In August, Lincoln wrote a long letter in excellent spirits, addressed to his old friends at Springfield, in lieu of a stump speech. People everywhere, he said, were urging him to bring about a cessation of the War. Now the rebellion was military in its whole character, and peace was only possible when the leaders of the rebel army should ask for it. None

<sup>1</sup> October 27th, 1863. Letters to his mother in *Wound-Dresser*.

of them had yet shown any signs of doing this. As the rebellion was military, so the means taken to overthrow it had been military also; the Proclamation of Emancipation had been justified to the nation by the verdict of men like Grant, who regarded it as the heaviest blow yet dealt to the rebels. That Proclamation could never now be retracted; its promise must be kept.

Then followed a racy, irresistible paragraph in Lincoln's inimitable vernacular: "The signs look better. The Father of Waters [the Mississippi] again goes unvexed to the sea. Thanks to the great North-West for it. Nor yet wholly to them. Three hundred miles up they met New England, Empire, Keystone, and Jersey, hewing their way right and left. The sunny South, too, in more colours than one, also lent a hand. On the spot, their part of the history was jotted down in black and white. The job was a great national one, and let none be banned who bore an honourable part in it. And while those who have cleared the great river may well be proud, even that is not all. It is hard to say that anything has been more bravely and well done than at Antietam, Murfreesboro', Gettysburg, and on many fields of lesser note. Nor must Uncle Sam's web feet be forgotten. At all the watery margins they have been present. Not only on the deep sea, the broad bay, and the rapid river, but also up the narrow, muddy bayou, and wherever the ground was a little damp, they have been and made their tracks. Thanks to all: for the great Republic—for the principle it lives by and keeps alive—for man's vast future—thanks to all."

He continued: "Peace does not appear so distant

as it did. I hope it will come soon, and come to stay ; and so come as to be worth the keeping in all future time . . . Still, let us not be over-sanguine of a speedy final triumph. Let us be quite sober. Let us diligently apply the means, never doubting that a just God, in His own good time, will give us the rightful result."

It would be a mistake to think that even at this time of stress Lincoln was wholly immersed in the labours of the Presidency. He was perhaps never more ready to abandon himself to anecdote, or laughter, and this we can understand the more readily, if we recall his saying,—“I laugh because I must not cry ; that's all—that's all."

His laughter was original, perfectly spontaneous, and very infectious. He had an actual dread of persons who were without humour. As the strain of the war grew sterner, this must have increased. And the reason is not difficult to guess. It is suggested in an incident related by Mr F. B. Carpenter. An Ohio Congress-man called on the President immediately after a military disaster. Lincoln did not want to discuss it. He contrived instead to introduce an anecdote. His visitor broke in severely, “Mr President, I did not come here this morning to hear stories ; it is too serious a time.” With that rebuke he was going, when Lincoln, preventing him, said sadly, “Ashley, sit down. I respect you as an earnest, sincere man. You cannot be more anxious than I have been constantly since the beginning of the War ; and I say to you now, that were it not for this occasional vent, I should die.”

The uses which Lincoln found for his gift of anecdote, were very many. As the special corres-

ponent of *The Times* pointed out to his English readers, the President's honesty was not altogether an advantage to him in matters requiring diplomacy, and where others would employ subterfuge, Lincoln fell back upon "a story."

This gift of the President's had other values.

Whitman quotes a good example of the anecdote as used for emphasis. Some pessimistic bank-presidents asked him, one dark day, if he were not beginning to lose his faith in the Union: by way of reply, he said, "When I was a young man in Illinois, I boarded for a time with a deacon of the Presbyterian Church. One night I was roused from my sleep by a rap at the door, and I heard the deacon's voice exclaiming, 'Arise, Abraham! the Day of Judgment has come!' I sprang from my bed and rushed to my window, and saw the stars falling in great showers; but looking back of them in the heavens, I saw the grand old constellations, with which I was so well acquainted, fixed and true in their places. Gentlemen, the world did not come to an end then nor will the Union now." <sup>1</sup>

The late Mr John Hay, one of his secretaries, has described the usual course of Lincoln's days at the White House. He rose early, especially in summer, when he made his quarters at the Soldiers' Home—taking a light breakfast and riding into Washington by eight o'clock. Official business began nominally at ten, but long before that hour the halls and ante-rooms were filled by callers. In the middle of the day he took a little fruit, or in winter a biscuit and glass of milk. He was supposed to dine between five and six, but usually, as he told Mrs Stowe, he just browsed round

<sup>1</sup> Whitman, *Complete Prose*, 331.

a little now and then. Indeed he ate less than other men, and disliking intoxicants, did not use them at all. After dinner the evening would be filled by Members of Congress, Senators, and other political visitors ; but occasionally he would escape, shutting himself up, or going to some theatre, concert, or lecture for an hour's breathing space. Between ten and eleven he would go to bed carrying off Tad who was probably asleep on his couch. This would be in winter at the White House. But there he slept badly. Often he sat up late at the War Department waiting for telegrams from the front, and consequently he would be later in rising.

Other accounts, show him, in the closing years, risen at four in the morning, reading his Bible and offering prayer in his room, and ready to receive a visitor at five. All authorities unite in declaring him the least methodical of men, who yet saved himself unnecessary labour, entrusting much of his official work to his secretaries—young men worthy of the trust—and signing their letters without reading them. His physical constitution and his temperament seem to have been economical, and capable of performing the maximum of labour with the minimum of friction, so long as they were given free play. As a subordinate, confined and restricted by rules, Lincoln could never have achieved a fraction of what, as a chief, he accomplished.

Though now only a small reader—his mind like his body seeming to require but little of the usual stimulants—he had been a devoted Shakespearian since his New Salem days, and had always carried a copy of the plays with him on circuit. He had an extraordinarily accurate verbal memory, and his mind

was well stored with favourite passages<sup>1</sup> such as the King's Speech in *Hamlet* (iii. 3), beginning

"O my offence is rank,"

and concluding with the great passage on repentance, and his own failure to repent ; and Macbeth's

"Treason has done his worst " (iii. 2).

Himself an excellent reciter, he was deeply interested in dramatic representations, and we find him about this time corresponding with an actor who had recently played Falstaff in Washington. Some of the plays Lincoln read over and over again, not systematically, but sympathetically. *Macbeth* was his favourite ; "I think nothing equals *Macbeth*. It is wonderful," he wrote.

The letter got into print, and was sneered at by some superior persons. Lincoln wrote again, "Those comments constitute a fair specimen of what has occurred to me through life. I have endured a great deal of ridicule without much malice ; and have

<sup>1</sup> Among his favourite poems was Oliver Wendell Holmes's *The Last Leaf*, especially the verse

"The mossy marbles rest  
On the lips that he has prest  
In their bloom,  
And the names he loved to hear  
Have been carved for many a year  
On the tomb."

Of this he said, "For pure pathos, in my judgment, there is nothing finer than those lines in the English language."

His predilection for the lines commencing

"Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud"

has already been referred to.

Among other works which left an impression on his mind were the Poems of Byron ; and in another field, Bacon's *Essays*, and again, Chambers' *Vestiges of Creation*.



received a great deal of kindness, not quite free from ridicule. I am used to it."

It was about the same time too, that he wrote to Mrs Lincoln in homely mood. "Tell dear Tad, poor 'Nanny Goat' is lost, and Mrs Cuthbert and I are in distress about it. The day you left, Nanny was found resting herself and chewing her little cud on the middle of Tad's bed ; but now she's gone ! The gardener kept complaining that she destroyed the flowers [at the Soldiers' Home, Lincoln's summer house in the further suburbs], till it was concluded to bring her down to the White House. This was done, and the second day she had disappeared, and has not been heard of since."

The story of Abraham Lincoln would hardly be true to the man if it were not patched with the sublime and the ridiculous side by side. And so, against these passages in the lighter vein, we will set that most solemn and dignified of all his public utterances, the address at the dedication of the national cemetery on the field of Gettysburg on the 19th November.<sup>1</sup>

"Fourscore and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final

<sup>1</sup> Referring to the unpopularity of the President among Washington politicians at this time, one of the most prominent Republicans said of his visit to Gettysburg, "Let the dead bury the dead."



MARY TODD LINCOLN.



resting-place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live.

It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate—we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us, the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honoured dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom; and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”

It seems strange that the beauty and power of this Address was not immediately acclaimed. Perhaps its effect was marred at the time of its delivery by the torrents of eloquence which flowed from other lips.

One of the President's party declares that Lincoln said to him, “Lamon, that speech won't scour! It is a flat failure, and the people are disappointed.” The same writer says that Seward also shared the feeling. However this may have been, that disappointment soon passed, and the only questions which are now raised about it refer to the origin of its concluding sentence. Lincoln himself once declared, “I am only

a retailer, I originate nothing," and while the sentence is his own, by right of setting and perfect assimilation to its proper style and thought, its prototype is to be found in a passage of Webster's famous reply to Hayne, in 1830, one of his chief favourites among American speeches, even in New Salem days. It is the declaration that the Constitution of the United States was no mere compact between sovereign States, but "an instrument of government made for the people, made by the people, and answerable to the people." Herndon says that he had also been struck, in 1858, by a passage in one of Theodore Parker's addresses, and had under-lined the sentence, "Democracy is direct self-government over all the people, for all the people, by all the people."

Gettysburg and Vicksburg had marked the turning of the tide. The Proclamation had justified itself. By the beginning of December it was estimated that it had brought 100,000 negroes, formerly slaves, into the service of the United States, half of whom were in the ranks, and half doing work which must otherwise have been performed by white men. Grant, too, had emerged signally from obscurity ; at the end of November he had driven the Confederates out of Tennessee, and was soon to be given supreme command. The autumn elections also had shown a return of popular confidence in the Administration.

But the President's troubles were by no means at an end. There still remained fifteen months of arduous fighting, and all the uncertainties of a Presidential Contest. All through the past year, moreover, the situation in Missouri had been full

of difficulty ; Conservatives and Radicals continually engaging in the most bitter recriminations, and urging their quarrel upon Lincoln's attention, till he almost lost patience with both parties. The Radicals, especially, were disposed to dictate to him, till he answered a little tartly, "It is my duty to hear all, but at last I must, within my sphere, judge what to do and what to forbear."

Trouble also was continually occurring between the civil and military authorities in all parts of the country, but most of all in the border States, and in such Southern States as were, like Louisiana, under process of reconstruction. This called for constant sympathy and insight, and unlimited tact and patience. Under the strain his nervous forces were becoming exhausted. Sometimes he was petulant and unjust to his petitioners, and to one of these he said, as a sort of excuse for himself, "I shall never be glad any more. . . . The springs of life are wearing away, and I shall not last." The feeling that he would not long outlive the struggle grew upon him. He expressed it more than once to his friends.

"How willingly," he would sometimes wearily exclaim, "would I exchange places to-day with the soldier who sleeps on the ground in the Army of the Potomac."

His most painful duty was always that of signing the death-warrants for deserters, and he exercised all the ingenuity of a pettifogging attorney to find justifications for delays, hoping that Time might save the offender.

Beyond all other troubles which weighed upon the President at this time—always excepting his anxiety



as to the destiny of his people—lay their sufferings, both North and South. He shared, by all his quick human sympathies, in the life of the private soldiers, and their families at home. He was a welcome and frequent visitor both in camp and hospital; and his time was always at the service of individual soldiers, their widows and wives.

He was deeply interested in the work of the various agencies established for the succour of the wounded of either party. He regarded all those who fought and suffered, whether Unionists or Confederates, as citizens of a common country. He continually sought escape from the partizanship into which he was necessarily forced by the struggle, finding relief and balance in the common issues of death and bereavement and their Divine consolations. He felt, as he wrote early in the year, that "Whatever shall tend to turn our thoughts from the unreasoning and uncharitable passions, prejudices, and jealousies incident to a great national trouble such as ours, and to fix them upon the vast and long-enduring consequences, for weal or for woe, which are to result from the struggle, and especially to strengthen our reliance on the Supreme Being for the final triumph of the right, cannot but be well for us all." Living in this spirit, he kept his poise and generosity of soul, at the very centre and heart of all the fierce passion and bitterness of those years of tremendous and absorbing strife.

## Chapter XII

# The Peace-maker

Was Lincoln an Opportunist?—His Fatalism—Prospects of Re-nomination—Grant—The Autumn of '64—Re-election—Lincoln's View of its Meaning—His Increased Religious Feeling—The XIII. Amendment—Chief-Justice Chase—Peace Talk—Second Inaugural—The Peace maker—Good Friday, 1865.

EARLY in April 1864, Lincoln suggested his relation to emancipation, and indeed to the war as a whole, in these remarkable words: "I claim not to have controlled events, but confess plainly that events have controlled me. Now, at the end of three years' struggle, the nation's condition is not what either party, or any man, devised or expected. God alone can claim it. Whither it is tending seems plain. If God now wills the removal of a great wrong, and wills also that we of the North, as well as you of the South, shall pay fairly for our complicity in that wrong, impartial history will find therein new cause to attest and revere the justice and goodness of God."

And on the next day he wrote, in answer to a young people's petition for the freeing of all slave-children, "While I have not the power to grant all they ask, I trust they will remember that God has, and that, as it best, He wills to do it."

These two passages indicate Lincoln's belief in the

divine ordering of events, and his consequent attitude. That attitude is so finely suggested by a sentence from Edward Carpenter's *Towards Democracy* that I cannot refrain from quoting it here: "Do not hurry: have faith. The sportsman does not say, 'I will start a hare at the corner of this field,' or 'I will shoot a turkey-buzzard at the foot of that tree;' but he stands indifferent and waits on emergency, and so makes himself master of it." As General Grant once put the matter in more colloquial language: "I shall be along myself, and will take advantage of anything that turns up."

Lincoln can hardly be said to have formulated and adhered to any great scheme of national policy, any great plan of campaign. He armed himself with his purpose, and waited on emergency. He was always "along himself," and ready to take advantage of opportunities. In this respect he may, perhaps, be called an opportunist, though it would be absurd to describe him as "a politician without principles." He had an established conviction as to the purpose of the American nation; and he was assured of its power to achieve that purpose; for it was not only a purpose, it was a destiny. He himself, as leader, for the time being, of the nation, could but keep that purpose always before him, while accepting the events of the time as indications of the way in which it was to be accomplished. He put all his manhood into his labour for its accomplishment, sure of eventual success; not beating himself to pieces against emergency, but making himself master of events by accepting them.

Enough has already been said in the preceding pages to give evidence of this, perhaps the most

interesting aspect of a truly great man's spiritual experience. Out of the three-cornered struggle between his ideal of universal liberty, his conviction that such liberty could only be the result of a gradual growth, and his never questioned personal duty to maintain and re-inaugurate the life of America as one nation, out of this struggle was issuing, as it were by his own hand and deed, a result from which he had continually turned away his face, the revolutionary emancipation of four millions of slaves. It was not so much the concrete result which astounded him. All through this strife from its beginning, even before he wrestled with Douglas in Illinois, he had been conscious of a fatal, pre-destined, superhuman power working through and in it.

This consciousness had been re-inforced and deepened by every year that had passed, and especially by the last three years. The man's natural fatalism, the feeling of a profound soul that he was obscurely but certainly in touch with the powers that mould history, had grown, until now he had entered into an almost conscious co-operation with the destiny of his nation and race. All this, and more, lies behind that easily repeated phrase: "I claim not to have controlled events, but confess plainly that events have controlled me." We shall find it more fully expressed a year later in the Second Inaugural.

With the increase of this feeling for destiny, there seems to have come to Lincoln a decrease of anxiety as to his own part in the great struggle. There was a long period of uncertainty as to what that part might be, but I think there grew up in him a feeling

of security that his work as President was not yet finished, and that he would again be chosen by the people to carry the country through the war. In any event he had faith in the future.

Greeley<sup>1</sup> and the Radicals were scouring the country and questioning one man after another, if they might find an available candidate to replace him; Frémont, Rosecrans, Grant, Vice-President Hamlin, Secretary Chase, all in succession had their claims discussed by the dissatisfied. But Lincoln himself as early as 26th October 1863, wrote calmly to a confidential friend, "A second term would be a great honour and a great labour, which, together, perhaps I would not decline, if tendered."

When questioned, Rosecrans, Grant and Hamlin peremptorily declined to stand as candidates;<sup>2</sup> but Frémont and Chase were actual aspirants. In February, however, the Republican members of the Legislature in Chase's own State of Ohio demanded Lincoln's re-nomination. Following immediately upon an organised attempt to secure the party nomination for the Secretary of the Treasury, this action of Ohio put a termination to his campaign.

Chase was a very able man, perhaps after the President the strongest personality then in politics,

<sup>1</sup> The ever impulsive Greeley had been filled with distrust. He would not visit Lincoln. He was afraid of the President's personal power and charm. As he had once said, "He is a wonderful man—wonderful. I never can harbour a thought against him, except when I keep away from him." But later he said, "No. I can't trust your 'honest Old Abe.' He is too smart for me. He thinks me a damned fool; but I am never fooled twice by the same individual."

<sup>2</sup> Rosecrans said to a dissatisfied journalist, "You are mistaken about Mr Lincoln. He is in his right place. I am in a position to know, and if you live you will see that I am right about him."

and Lincoln retained his services as long as possible. In spite of increasing friction he remained in the Cabinet till midsummer.

The movement for Lincoln's re-nomination assumed the character of a spontaneous popular demand, springing from the people everywhere, notably from among the soldiers in the field, with whom "Father Abraham," as they called him, was a great favourite. Among professional politicians the President had few friends. Indeed, it is said that at the end of 1863, he had only a single real supporter in the Lower House. This was not merely the result of a certain congenital antagonism between statesmen of the type of Lincoln and the average Member of Congress, but was due also to the special relationship in which, owing to his personality, as well as to the war, he stood to the mass of the people.

The President and Congress were at odds in many matters; they had disagreed on the subject of compensated gradual emancipation, they disagreed perhaps most of all on the reconstruction of the States which were being won back to their allegiance by military force. And the heads of the Republican party in Washington disagreed with him on a hundred issues arising out of the conduct of the war, as well as on the constitution of his Cabinet. But if the politicians were opposed to Lincoln and in favour of Chase, they knew their *métier* too well to persist, once they had been convinced that the people were in his favour, and they became convinced in time. They too, learned that the word of the old countryman was true, when he stopped Lincoln in the road to say,



"The Lord is with you, Mr President . . . and the people too, Sir, *and the people too!*" They were not likely to push their distrust of the man so far as to lose one, who, from whatever reason, was the most available candidate.

Lincoln had, of course, powerful supporters outside Congress ; and at this time some of those who had, at an earlier period, doubted him the most, were become his staunch supporters. Among these were Emerson and Lowell. The latter wrote in the January issue of the *North Atlantic Review*, 1864, under the caption of "The President's Policy" :

"While every day was bringing the people nearer to the conclusion which all thinking men saw to be inevitable from the beginning, it was wise in Mr Lincoln to leave the shaping of his policy to events. In this country where the rough and ready understanding of the people is sure, at last, to be the controlling power, a profound common-sense is the best genius for statesmanship. Hitherto the wisdom of the President's measures has been justified by the fact that they have always resulted in more firmly uniting public opinion . . . . We believe it is the general judgment of the country on the acts of the present Administration, that they, have been, in the main, judicious, and well-timed. The only doubt about some of them seems to be as to their constitutionality."

Lincoln's political position in the country was greatly strengthened at this time by an auspicious event. In March 1864, Halleck, having asked to be excused from his post of chief military adviser to the President, Grant was summoned to Washington, and

on Lincoln's nomination, created by the Senate, Lieutenant-General of all the armies of the United States.

The new commander had won the absolute confidence of the President, the Army and the people, and when, on the 5th of May he set out on his march to Richmond, they were all alike certain of his success. At the end of April, Lincoln had written to him :

" I wish to express . . . my entire satisfaction with what you have done up to this time, so far as I understand it. The particulars of your plans I neither know nor seek to know. You are vigilant and self-reliant ; and, pleased with this, I wish not to obtrude any constraints or restraints upon you. While I am very anxious that any great disaster or capture of our men in great numbers shall be avoided, I know these points are less likely to escape your attention than they would be mine. If there is anything wanting which is within my power to give, do not fail to let me know it. And now, with a brave army and a just cause, may God sustain you."

Grant was a Westerner and cordially and sincerely appreciated the power and frankness of the President—thus to the great advantage of the nation, the two men understood one another. " He is the first general I have had," Lincoln once said ; and now Grant's forward movement coinciding as did its commencement with the final withdrawal of Chase's candidacy, greatly raised the popular enthusiasm for the Administration.

At the end of May, after desperate fighting and heavy losses, which the President followed with sleepless anxiety, Grant was within twenty miles of Richmond. There followed the disaster of Cold

Harbour on 5th June, and a change, not in determination or policy, but in his line of attack to the southern side of the city.

Meanwhile, in May, a party of Missourian and other malcontents calling themselves the "radical Democracy" had nominated Frémont for the Presidency. About four hundred persons took part in the convention: and it is recorded that on receipt of the news, Lincoln, taking up the Bible—which with a Shakespeare and a copy of the United States Statutes habitually lay on his desk—promptly turned to the appropriate passage which describes the party in the cave of Adullam: "And everyone that was in distress, and everyone that was in debt, and everyone that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them; and there were with him about four hundred men." Indeed he seems to have treated the whole affair with a certain good-humoured indifference. His own nomination by the Republican party was now certain, and followed at Baltimore on the 8th June. The only other name before the convention was that of Grant, urged, against his own veto, by the Missourian malcontents; and abandoned by them after the first vote. Lincoln was then unanimously chosen.

In the "platform" on which he was nominated, and which as the party nominee he accepted, there were three significant passages. The first was a resolution requiring such an amendment to the Constitution "as shall terminate and forever prohibit the existence of slavery within the limits or the jurisdiction of the United States."

This if not actually inserted by the President's

instigation was in close accord with his known wishes ; with which however the other two were less harmonious. One demanded, under a thin disguise of phrases, the reconstruction of the Cabinet in stricter accordance with the party platform ; the other required some more open warning than had yet been given to the Government of France that its attempt to establish a monarchy in Mexico would be viewed by America " with extreme jealousy."

As to the former, while Lincoln, during the summer and autumn, made certain necessary changes in the direction of greater unanimity and harmony, he would never really admit any authority but his own in Cabinet-making. In the Mexican matter he steadily refused to run any risks of European entanglements.

The fact that at the end of May, Frémont's supporters were a mere handful of Republican malcontents by no means assured Lincoln's election. It became necessary to obtain all possible support from the Democratic party, and it is now believed that Lincoln used his personal influence to secure the nomination of Andrew Johnson, Governor of Tennessee, a strong Democratic supporter both of the war and of emancipation, as Vice-President. At the time, however, Lincoln's friends did not suspect his preference, so carefully and adroitly did he effect his object.

Lincoln and Johnson were nominated in June, but the Democratic convention delayed its meeting till the end of August, and the twelve weeks that intervened were the most dubious of the year. Chase, the man in the Cabinet upon whom the commercial classes had chiefly relied, had at last become so

irritable as to be an impossible co-adjutor, and finally resigned after mid-summer. Much to his astonishment, Lincoln accepted his resignation. In July, the Northern States were alarmed by Early's sudden raid in Maryland, which brought him within an ace of capturing both the Capital and the President. After more than three years' fighting, Washington could not yet be accounted safe, though Richmond seemed impregnable. There followed another call for half a million soldiers, at which a new groan went up from the Free-states. And in the same month, the President found himself in severe antagonism once again with the Radical Republicans in Congress, and with Horace Greeley in New York.

The Congress-men wished to carry out Reconstruction on their own lines, and Lincoln vetoed their bill as demanding an unnecessary and undesirable uniformity in the reconstructing States. Greeley was now accusing the Administration of protracting fighting for its own ends. He was convinced that a large party among the Confederates were weary of the war, and prepared to return to the Union; and, moreover, that if the war were not speedily ended, there would be an insurrection in the North. He was thus easily led by certain Confederate agents in Canada, to believe that they had full powers from Richmond to make proposals for peace, and wrote to the President urging him to meet them. Lincoln, however, knew the attitude of Jefferson Davis, and his advisers, and saw through the specious proposals. Nevertheless he promptly said that Greeley should go and bring these agents to him if they had such powers as he indicated.

Greeley was taken by surprise: he did not want to

be involved in a mission which might only prove ridiculous: but the President's mind was made up. "I not only intend a sincere effort for peace," he wrote, "but I intend that you shall be a personal witness that it is made." It was the only way of dealing with this earnest but muddle-headed politician.

The mission ended in a fiasco, but Greeley was either too really hoodwinked, or too astute, to publicly admit his failure, and much of the disappointment at his want of success was visited on Lincoln, who was widely believed to have required impossible terms.

There were other peace-missions, and the two associated with a Reverend Colonel Jaquess are particularly interesting from the light they throw upon Lincoln's personal attitude. This Methodist colonel, whom the President knew for a sober, level-headed man, became convinced that he was called to go into the Southern States and speak peace, especially to the Methodists there, in the name of the Lord. When Mr Gilmore, who was acting unofficially as an agent in the matter, talked with Lincoln about it, he reports the President as saying: "He says he feels God's hand in it, and He has laid the duty upon him. Now, if he feels that kind of authority, he can't fail to affect the element on which he expects to operate, and that Methodist element is very powerful at the South. . . . Such talk [as his] in you or me might sound fanatical, but in Jaquess it is simply natural and sincere. And I am not at all sure he isn't right. God selects His own instruments, and sometimes they are queer ones; for instance He chose me to steer the ship through a great crisis." He continued that Jaquess was "remarkably level-headed; I never knew a man more so. Can



you account for it [his feeling of divine compulsion] except on his own supposition that God is in it? And if that be so, something will come out of it, perhaps not what Jacquess expects, but what will be of service to the right. So, though there is risk about it, I shall let him go. . . . His evident sincerity will protect him.<sup>1</sup>

The insurrection which Greeley had prophesied, was planned to take place in Illinois, first on 4th July then on the 29th of August and finally on election day, 8th November, and may or may not have been connected with a projected assassination of the President on the 13th of August, in which it would seem that Wilkes Booth was implicated. Neither the assassination nor the insurrection took place, but they sufficiently remind us of the dangerous temper of the so-called "peace Democrats."

Politically, the position was indeed almost desperate. On the 23rd of August Lincoln himself made a memorandum to that effect; adding that, in case of his electoral defeat, he would have to so co-operate with his successor as to save the union in the four months between his own defeat and the inauguration of the new President; after that, there could be no hope, since the Democratic candidate would be pledged to immediate peace.

Corruption was now making itself felt in every direction; it was feeding upon the diseased and congested condition of the nation's life. The continuance of such a condition was its dearest wish: and seizing upon this idea, the more reckless critics of the Administration were now beginning openly to allege an unholy alliance between the President and all that

<sup>1</sup>J. R. Gilmore, *Personal Recollections*, etc.

is vilest in American political life. The dragging course of the war lent the only conceivable colour of truthfulness to their attack ; but it must have been singularly bitter to Lincoln. He had become very weary and discouraged. Yet even in these blackest hours his irresistible sense of comedy would refuse to be quelled. With grim earnestness, twitching with humour, he would say : " Well, I cannot run the political machine ; I have enough on my hands without that. It is the people's business—the election is in their hands. If they turn their backs to the fire, and get scorched in the rear, they'll find they have to sit on the blister ! " But he foresaw that the Democrats would nominate M'Clellan and he suspected that, unless Grant won some signal successes before November, the Republican vote would be so split by Frémont and the malcontents as to insure M'Clellan's success.

M'Clellan was nominated at Chicago, where Lincoln had been chosen four years before. But he could not stand on the party platform with its resolution that, in view of the failure of the war, immediate efforts should be made for a cessation of hostilities. For news began at once to come thick and fast of Union successes. Sherman, whom Grant had left in command beyond the mountains when he himself came East, had captured Atlanta, the great confederate arsenal, while the navy had seized the city and harbour of Mobile. Then came Sheridan's " ride," and his brilliant victories which sent Early " whirling " through Virginia.

These several events rendered the platform of the Democrats somewhat farcical ; and when in September, Frémont withdrew from the contest, the success of

Lincoln became almost certain. Nevertheless, remembering perhaps how he lost the Senatorship in 1854, he took such measures as were possible to make assurance doubly sure ; asking Sherman whether he could not spare the soldiers of Indiana to vote in their State elections in October, finding opportunities to address the soldiers returning home on furlough, and insuring that the New York soldiers' votes should be duly collected in the field. It is said that he even offered an important foreign embassy to the editor of a great New York daily which had been supporting M'Clellan, and with the desired effect ; while the whole power of the War Department under Stanton was legitimately used to further his re-election.

On the other hand, he would not allow office-holders like the loyal post-master at Philadelphia, to influence their subordinates in the exercise of the suffrage ; and, in spite of the clamour of Republican politicians in every part of the country, he refused to stay the draft for the army. He had promised to supply Grant with men, and Grant and Sherman needed more and more.

The weeks went over, and the preliminary elections indicated a striking revival of popular confidence in the Administration.<sup>1</sup> This was fully sustained on the

<sup>1</sup> How slow were English observers to recognise Lincoln's real greatness may be intimated here by a striking example. Writing of the prospect of Lincoln's re-election, in the *National Review* for November 1864, the late Mr Freeman said : " However small Mr Lincoln may seem in our eyes, he does not seem small in the eyes of a vast party of his countrymen. Probably no one puts him on a level with any of the Presidents down to Jackson ; but it is just because he is felt to be a man of a different mould from any of the Presidents since Jackson, that one of the great parties in the Commonwealth is prepared to raise him a second time to the head of the State."

great day, for, on 8th November, the voting for Presidential electors showed a Republican popular majority of nearly half a million, out of a total poll of some four millions; insuring an electoral vote in favour of Lincoln of 212 to 21. M'Clellan only succeeded in carrying three out of the twenty-five voting States, New Jersey, Kentucky, and Delaware. The soldiers' vote went for Lincoln in the proportion of three to one.

As compared with the election of 1860, the total poll was less by half a million votes. Eleven States, which then refused Lincoln their support, were now either in rebellion or under military occupation. Three new States had been admitted, and these supported the Republican candidate, giving him, in all, two-thirds of the total possible electoral vote; but Lincoln's, popular majority of half a million would doubtless have been submerged under the Democratic suffrages of the "Solid South," could they have been cast.

As it was, M'Clellan's poll was half a million more than Douglas's, and almost equal to Lincoln's, in 1860; while Lincoln's own had increased by just half a million. The fact that M'Clellan only received 21 electoral votes in 1864, where Lincoln, for the same popular vote, had received 180 in 1860, plainly tells the weakness of a minority under the American system of election.

But the election of 1864 gave clear evidence that the people, whatever grounds they had for dissatisfaction, were unwilling as yet to give up the struggle; or even, as Lincoln had put it, "to swap horses while crossing the river."<sup>1</sup> Lincoln's own deductions from

<sup>1</sup> The anxiety of the hour has well been expressed by Emerson, when he says, "Seldom in history was so much staked on a popular vote. I

the returns, as set forth in his Message to Congress a month later, are of interest. To have conducted a Presidential election, fought on party lines, in an orderly manner under the strain of a great war, was in itself a triumph for popular government.

Even more, perhaps, the fact that after three and a half years, hope deferred had not impaired the national loyalty. No candidate for any office had, he said, sought votes on the avowal that he was for dissolution. "On the distinct issue of Union or no Union, the politicians have shown their instinctive knowledge that there is no diversity among the people. In affording the people the fair opportunity of showing one to another and to the world this firmness and unanimity of purpose, the election has been of vast value to the national cause." Further, the return of votes cast showed that, in spite of the war, the population was steadily increasing: there was no exhaustion of national resources; the struggle could, in fact, go on indefinitely.

And that was well, for as yet there was no possibility of peace. Jefferson Davis's one condition would be independence—separation: the American people's one demand was for national unity.

The Message ended with a declaration that he himself would never be a party to the re-enslavement of any person set free under his Proclamation; and with the statement that "the war will cease on the part of the Government whenever it shall have ceased on the part of those who began it."

suppose never in history." Walt Whitman spoke at a later time of the "enthusiasm in '64 for re-electing Abraham Lincoln, and the reason behind that enthusiasm," as "the only thing like a great and worthy idea vitalising a party and making it heroic," since 1776.

In looking back over the record of this year, one cannot but be struck by the evidence in Lincoln's letters and State Papers of a deep, and even an increasing, religious feeling. This now finds more and more frequent utterance in his solemn acknowledgments of Providential guidance and support, both for himself and for the nation, and his recognition that he had been chosen for these awful responsibilities, not only by the voice of the people, but by the will of God. Thus, speaking in April at the Baltimore Sanitary Fair, and alluding to the use of negro troops, so bitterly resented in the South and the subject of such keen discussion in the North, he said : " I am responsible for it to the American people, to the Christian world, to history, and in my final account to God."

Again in May he issued a sincere recommendation of " most sincere prayer to and reliance upon Him without Whom all human effort is vain." This religious feeling takes a somewhat different form in his scathing criticism of pro-slavery religionists, with its abrupt ending, " But let me forbear, remembering it is also written, ' Judge not lest ye be judged.'"

When they are not the mere perfunctory acknowledgments of religious superstition, Proclamations of Thanksgiving for military successes are apt to breathe a narrow nationalism which blasphemes the very name of the Universal Deity. Now Lincoln issued a series of Proclamations, but they are free from both these obnoxious characteristics ; for—while they specifically enjoin a devout acknowledgment to the Supreme Being " in whose hands are the destinies of nations " for such and such " glorious achievements of the army"—it is



impossible to regard them as in any sense either perfunctionary or partizan. While the President asks for public thanksgivings for the preservation of the "national existence against the insurgent rebels who have been waging a cruel war . . . for its overthrow ;" while he asks prayers for the protection of "our brave soldiers and their leaders in the field ;" for the comfort of their families and of the sick and wounded, and for the continued upholding of the Government against "all the efforts of public enemies and secret foes"—one feels instinctively that even towards these foes there is no malice or bitterness, but a loving kindness that, like God's sunshine or rain, embraces alike "the evil and the good." He prays for success, being convinced that success is in God's purpose for America, and yet convinced that it can only be achieved by national prayer ; he prays for success, but there is no malediction in his heart.

It was on the 4th of September, the day after the Proclamation we have been quoting, that Lincoln wrote his well-known letter to Mrs Joseph John Gurney, a Quaker Correspondent, one of whose letters of earnest friendship was found upon his body after his assassination. Commencing by addressing her as "my esteemed friend," he refers to the solemn Sunday morning visit received from her and three other Quakers some two years before, immediately after the issue of the preliminary Proclamation of Emancipation, and to a more recent letter. These he has never forgotten.

He expresses his gratitude to her for her efforts to strengthen his reliance upon God. He acknowledges his failures to perceive in advance the purposes of the Almighty ; and says, "we must work earnestly in the

best lights He gives us, trusting that so working still conduces to the great ends He ordains. Surely He intends some great good to follow this mighty convulsion, which no mortal could make, and no mortal could stay."

That hope of "some great good to follow" must often have sustained him in hours of depression, as it now refreshed him almost within sight of the end. It was in his thoughts when he wrote a few weeks later, in another Proclamation of Thanksgiving: "He has been pleased to animate and inspire our minds and hearts with fortitude, courage and resolution, sufficient for the great trial of civil war into which we have been brought by our adherence as a nation to the cause of freedom and humanity, and to afford to us reasonable hopes of an ultimate and happy deliverance from all our dangers and afflictions."

Another example of his feeling at this time is to be found in his letter to a Boston woman who had lost five sons in the war. "I feel how weak and fruitless," he wrote, "must be any words of mine which should attempt to beguile you from the grief of a loss so overwhelming. But I cannot refrain from tendering to you the consolation that may be found in the thanks of the Republic they died to save. I pray that our heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement, and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom."

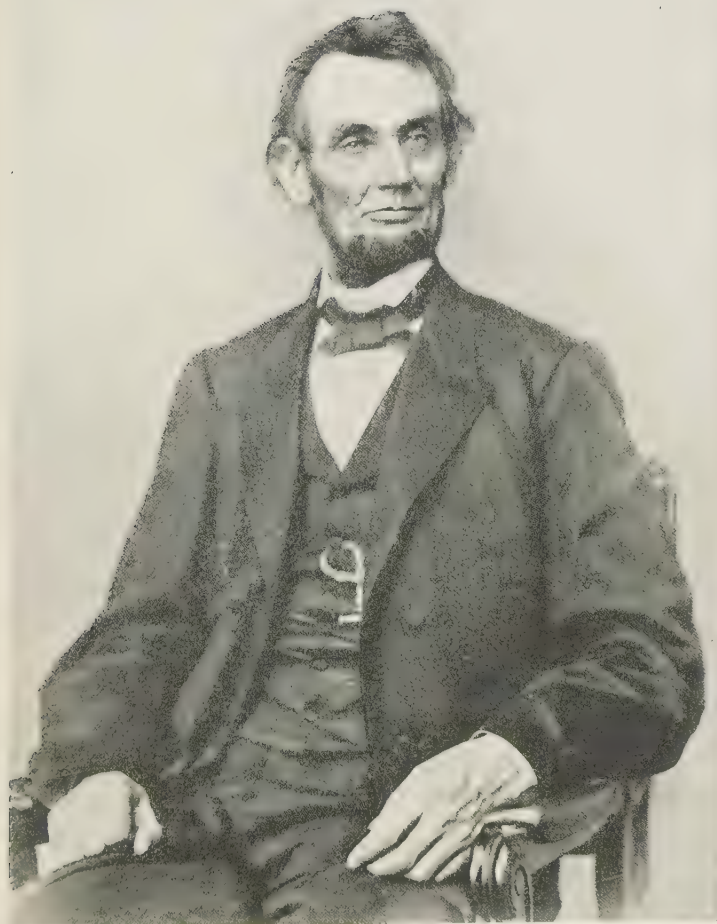
We noted the influence, many years earlier, of a Bible given to him by Mrs Speed. His final opinion on that book, spoken some seven months before his

death, has apparently been overlooked by some of his biographers and critics. His large brave mind was not distorted by prejudices; it set the right value on great things. Speaking to a negro committee who had presented him with a copy of the Bible, he said simply and frankly, first of himself and then of the volume, "I have done all I could for the good of mankind generally. . . . In regard to this great Book, I have but to say, it is the best gift God has given to man."

While he said this with absolute candour, he did not pretend to regard the Bible as wholly different in kind from other great literature. And it should here be added that the whole of his religious attitude was based not at all upon authority, but always upon the evidence of experience. His belief in God, his belief in Prayer, his belief in the Bible, were all practical and experimental—the result of the free, courageous, unprejudiced exercise of his mind upon the evidences before him.

There are many passages all through his life which bear witness to his passionate belief in the efficacy of prayer, and even of prayer for definite results. Among the most striking of these is that narrated by General Sickles, who seems to have had a long conversation with him in a Washington Hospital on the Sunday after Gettysburg.

The President declared that amid the prevailing uncertainty, he had not been anxious about the result. For a little earlier he had gone to his room, locked himself in, "and prayed mightily for a victory." "I told God," he is reported as saying, "I told God that if we were to win the battle He must do it,



LINCOLN IN 1864 ; AGED 55.



for I had done all I could. I told Him this was His war, and our cause was His cause . . . And after that—I don't know how it was, and I can't explain it, but soon—a sweet comfort crept into my soul that things would go all right at Gettysburg . . .” Probably the actual words are not Lincoln's, but their general burden is in character with the man.

Other striking evidence is contained in the curious account in Dr Holland's *Life*,<sup>1</sup> in which the nurse who was with him during his son Willie's illness and death related how, when he was depressed by the fear of a military reverse, she encouraged him to trust God and to pray to Him. News came of a fortunate issue: the President returned crying, “Good news! Good news! The victory is ours and God is good.” She suggested that now he had evidence there was “nothing like prayer.” He was, perhaps, a little put out by her assumption that it was quite a new thing to him, for he said, “Yes, there is—praise; prayer and praise.”

One cannot read this paragraph without a smile. The child-likeness—shall we say childishness?—of the faith expressed contrasts in so startling a fashion with our pre-conceived ideas of a statesman's habitual attitude toward his task. Lincoln was the greater statesman because he remained also a child in heart. I think it probable that here again the pious narrator has contributed something to the story, but not the childlike quality. I think that is authentic. It is in keeping with other passages, especially in his later life.

One other incident—three days before the end, he asked a Quaker visitor to pray with him: and she

<sup>1</sup> Page 487.



felt his hand tremble upon hers like a leaf. Afterwards he said, "I feel helped and strengthened by your prayers."<sup>1</sup>

As Mrs Lincoln afterwards said to one of his biographers, his religion "was a kind of poetry in his nature . . . He was never a technical Christian." Walt Whitman who, while contrasting strongly with him in personality, had much in common with Abraham Lincoln, wrote of him—"the invisible foundations and vertebrae of his character, more than any man's in history, were mystical, abstract, moral, and spiritual—while upon all of them was built, and out of all of them radiated, under the control of the average of circumstances what the vulgar call 'horse-sense,' and à life often bent by temporary but most urgent materialistic and political reasons."

But the strongest evidence for the man's truly mystical nature is found in his living realisation of the significance of the actual events among which he lived. I need not dwell upon this here; but it is finely illustrated in one of the last letters of 1864 which strikes with a strong practical touch the ineffable note of Vista. "The work of the Plymouth emigrants was the glory of their age. While we reverence their memory, let us not forget how vastly greater is our opportunity." I need only give this example in passing. The quality is hardly to be missed in any of his more serious utterances.

As we have seen, Lincoln regarded the Edict of Freedom as the central act of his administration, a deed for which he was personally responsible, and by which, especially, he expected and wished to be remembered.

<sup>1</sup> Cartland's, *Southern Heroes*.

It was then with great satisfaction that he saw an Amendment to the Constitution, finally abolishing slavery in the United States, passed through Congress at the end of January, 1865. This had not been accomplished without a hard struggle, and he himself had to bring all possible legitimate influence to bear upon Members of Congress in order to secure the necessary majority. It was with a gleeful pride that he was presently able to announce to the people gathered below his window that his own State of Illinois was the first to give its vote in support of the Amendment; and that slave-holding Maryland which, three and a half years earlier, had been enemy's country, was now ratifying the abolition of American slavery.

But the Amendment required the ratification of twenty-four States before it became valid; and the final declaration could not be made till mid-November, when the re-constituted South Carolina, the seat and source of disaffection for half a century, accepted the declaration that "neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction."

This event occurred seven months after the death of him who had prepared its way. But if he died before the completion of his task, the President had done all in his power to render that accomplishment secure. He had on the one hand hastened the reconstruction of loyal governments pledged to emancipation in such of the Southern States as were once again under Federal Control: and on the other, the

death of Chief Justice Taney had enabled him, at the end of 1864, to put a great anti-slavery leader in his place, and thus to insure the nation against further pro-slavery constructions of the Constitution from the Supreme Court. This appointment is one of the most remarkable of the many examples of Lincoln's magnanimity and justice: that Chase had persistently opposed and misunderstood him, and even that he had attempted to oust him from the presidency at a critical juncture in national affairs, could not prejudice his chief against him.

Lincoln had, indeed, postponed the appointment to the highest office in his gift till after the elections, being troubled by Chase's restless ambition for that other office which the President saw that he could never obtain. But he had a high estimate of the Secretary whose services he had had, for a time, to forgo. "Of all the great men I have known, Chase is equal to about one and a half of the best of them," was his verdict. And before accepting his resignation. Lincoln had said, "Mr Chase is a very able man. He is a very ambitious man, and I think, on the subject of the Presidency, a little insane. He has not always behaved very well lately, and people say to me—'now is the time to *crush him out*.' Well, I'm not in favour of crushing anybody out! If there is anything a man can do, and do it well, I say, let him do it. Give him a chance." So finally the appointment was made, and made in such a manner that Chase, who had already begun to doubt whether he really appreciated Lincoln, wrote to him with unexpected warmth: "Be assured that I prize your confidence and good will more than any nomination

to office." If the words were as well weighed as they were cordial, they certainly represented a very high value set by Chase upon the confidence of one to whom he had too rarely himself accorded any.

The close of the war was drawing on, and the "peace worth winning" was coming into view. Any other factitious peace which might, for the moment, have satisfied men like Greeley, was impossible while Lincoln remained President. Efforts for such a peace were made indeed by certain Secession leaders; notably by Vice-president Stephens, Lincoln's old friend. And it is possible that Grant might have attempted to make terms, either with them or with General Lee, had he not been categorically prohibited from so doing by the President, who did not propose to entrust the General, in whom he otherwise confided, with diplomatic or executive duties.

Lincoln had little hope of any agreement, but Grant's conviction that Stephens at least was in earnest, brought him over from Washington to Fortress Monroe to meet the Southern Commissioners. Already the President had been assured by ex-Postmaster Blair that there was a steadily growing discontent and despondency among those who may be called the second officers of the Rebellion. Davis, their chief, "could not feel like a beaten man"; but now that Georgia and North Carolina were ready to return to their allegiance, his shrewder advisers were preparing themselves for the end.

The Confederate chief still constantly spoke of "the two countries" where Lincoln reiterated the phrase "our one common country"; and when the President

and the peace commissioners met on board steamer on the 2nd February, it became clear to all that Lincoln had fully grasped this difference and that he could never accept the Confederate position. The commissioners hoped for some third alternative—a war either of liberation or of conquest in Mexico, such as Blair seems to have suggested to Davis. But the President kept them to the real issue. On this he was stern and inexorable; on all else he was full of humour and generosity.

When he said that he had no power to treat with rebels, one of the commissioners reminded him of the precedent of Charles I. and of his dealings with the Parliamentary leaders. Lincoln retorted quickly that he did not profess to be posted in history. "On all such matters I will turn you over to Seward," said he, "all I distinctly recollect about the case of Charles I. is that he lost his head." So the Commissioner dropped his precedent.

But if he would not be a party to any factitious peace, the liberation of the South from her bondage and her restoration to her full privileges in the Union—for this was the purpose of Lincoln and Seward as opposed to that of a partizan Northern triumph over a fallen foe—this liberation and restoration was constantly foremost in the President's mind. He was eager that it should be effected with the greatest possible magnanimity.

He offered to use all his influence to obtain a grant of £80,000,000 from Congress to be paid to the Southern States as compensation for the extinction of slavery throughout their lands. Though the negotiations failed, the President returned to make that

proposal in all earnestness and good faith to his Cabinet. But his advisers unanimously disapproved. Such an offer would be regarded they said as a token of decreasing confidence ; and with a heavy sigh he so indorsed his memorandum, and again relinquished, at least for the moment, the hope he had cherished so long.

We owe an illuminating glimpse into the President's life and thought at this period to his old friend Joshua Speed. The whole account of their interview is full of character, but is unfortunately too long to quote. It may be read at length in Herndon and Weik's *Life*.

It was one evening toward the end of February, 1865, that Speed found him surrounded by State documents, officials, and visitors, weary and worn by constant labour.

Two country women were the last of the multitude who were seeking an interview ; and at length Lincoln turned fretfully to them. They had come to beg for the release of a son and husband imprisoned in Pennsylvania for resisting the Draft. Lincoln sent for the list of prisoners in that district, and, with some whimsical speech, he freed them all. The women were overcome by gratitude, the younger going down on her knees before him. "Get up," said he sharply, "don't kneel to me, but thank God, and go." The older bade him good-bye, saying, "I shall probably never see you again till we meet in Heaven." Lincoln was much moved, and took her hand in both of his. As he went with her to the door, he exclaimed, "I am afraid with all my troubles I shall never get to the resting-place you speak of ;



but if I do I am sure I shall find you. That you wish me to get there is, I believe, the best wish you could make for me. Good-bye."

Speed remonstrated with the worn man for allowing himself to be so agitated. He answered wearily, that his friend was partly right: that he was ill, and ought to be in bed, his hands and feet being always cold; but that such scenes as that with these women made him forget himself, and gave him real pleasure. "It is more than one can often say that, in doing right, one has made two people happy in one day." To seek such a result was perhaps this singular President's greatest temptation.

The formal counting of the electoral votes had taken place in the Senate, and his election was confirmed. His feeling about his victory is lucidly described in his own beautiful words, "If I know my heart my gratitude is free from any taint of personal triumph. . . . It is no pleasure to me to triumph over anyone." And on the 4th of March, in his second Inaugural, he again emphasised for himself but still more for the national party he represented, and so for the whole nation, this impersonal, beneficent spirit.

That address is so nobly felicitous and at the same time so typical of Abraham Lincoln that it must here be given in full.

"Fellow Country-men: at this second appearing to take the oath of the presidential office, there is less occasion for an extended address than there was at the first. Then a statement, somewhat in detail, of a course to be pursued, seemed fitting and proper. Now, at the expiration of four years, during which public declarations have been constantly called forth on every

point and phase of the great contest which still absorbs the attention and engrosses the energies of the nation, little that is new could be presented. The progress of our arms, upon which all else chiefly depends, is as well known to the public as to myself; and it is, I trust, reasonably satisfactory and encouraging to all. With high hope for the future, no prediction in regard to it is ventured.

“On the occasion corresponding to this four years ago, all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil war. All dreaded it—all sought to avert it. While the inaugural address was being delivered from this place, devoted altogether to saving the Union without war, insurgent agents were in the city seeking to destroy it without war—seeking to dissolve the Union, and divide effects, by negotiation. Both parties deprecated war; but one of them would make war rather than let the nation survive; and the other would accept war rather than let it perish. And the war came.

“One-eighth of the whole population were coloured slaves, not distributed generally over the Union, but localised in the Southern part of it. These slaves constituted a peculiar and powerful interest. All knew that this interest was, somehow, the cause of the war. To strengthen, perpetuate, and extend this interest was the object for which the insurgents would rend the Union, even by war; while the government claimed no right to do more than to restrict the territorial enlargement of it.

“Neither party expected for the war the magnitude or the duration which it has already attained. Neither anticipated that the cause of the conflict might cease

with, or even before, the conflict itself should cease. Each looked for an easier triumph, and a result less fundamental and astounding. Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God; and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces; but let us judge not, that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered—that of neither has been answered fully.

“The Almighty has his own purposes. ‘Woe unto the world because of offenses! for it must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh.’ If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of those offenses which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope—fervently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, ‘The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.’

“With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see

the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in ; to bind up the nation's wounds ; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves, and with all nations."

Lincoln said he thought that this address, though not immediately popular, would "wear well." He observed shrewdly that people did not like to be reminded that the ways of the Almighty were not as the ways of men ; that God had differed from them. "To deny it, however, in this case," wrote he ten days later, "is to deny that there is a God governing the world. It is a truth which I thought needed to be told, and, as whatever of humiliation there is in it falls most directly on myself, I thought others might afford for me to tell it." The noble and earnest telling of that truth forms a fit climax to Lincoln's public utterances.

Day by day the close of the great struggle seemed to be coming into sight. On 24th March, after the strain of the winter, the President and his family joined General Grant a few miles from Richmond. Robert, the eldest of the two boys now remaining to them, had completed his college course, and was watching the close of the war at Grant's side ; "Tad," the youngest, was twelve years old on the 4th of April, a bright, delicate, high-spirited, little lad, with an impediment which made his speech at this time, hardly intelligible to any but his parents.

The presidential party which included Senator Sumner spent their holiday on a little steamer anchored in the James River. The day after their arrival, Lee

made a sudden fierce attack on the western wing of Grant's army, in the hope of weakening it and finally escaping beyond it to the South. He was, however, unsuccessful.

On the 27th and 28th, Lincoln held a conference on the river with Grant, Admiral Porter and Sherman, who had now accomplished his tremendous winter's march from Atlanta to the sea, and then again northward, passing through the Carolinas and destroying on his way the communications of Richmond with the rest of the Confederacy. The Generals talked of one more great battle, but Lincoln, weary of bloodshed, urged them to find some alternative, some less costly means of checkmating a defeated foe.

Mrs Lincoln returned to Washington on 1st April, and two days later Richmond capitulated. Jefferson Davis had fled to the South, and Lee was making a last heroic effort to follow with his starving troops. In pursuit of him went Grant; while Lincoln with half a score of armed sailors entered the fallen capital of the Confederacy.

His was truly the advent of a liberator not a conqueror. The city was in chaos and its buildings in ruin, for the insurgents had fired the great warehouses and magazines on their departure, and a portion of Richmond was still in flames. Entering simply, almost unguarded and on foot, the negroes flocked about him with every manifestation of wild devotion and even of worship. He was their "great Messiah"; and here in the flesh amongst them stood the being whose name had come to be identified for them with the hope of their race.

He spent the night with Tad in the city, intent on

measures of mercy and restoration. Returning to his quarters on the steamer he was met by an old Illinois friend who was delighted to find him in exuberant spirit, erect, buoyant, and full of anecdotes. The unbearable burden of the four years seemed to have dropped already from his shoulders ; he had found at last his natural and proper service of "binding up the nation's wounds."

And a great task lay before him, the beneficent guidance of that industrial and social revolution which had only commenced with the emancipation of the slaves. Slavery had been legally destroyed, but free labour had not yet taken its place. The whole social organisation of the South, and not merely the political governments of its individual States, must now be reconstructed in harmony with the ideals of the Republic. And, as though this task, the direct outcome of the war, were not in itself sufficient to tax the patience and wisdom of any state-craft, an even greater task, the legacy in part of the self-same struggle, was shaping itself in the North, where capital was already becoming congested, and corrupting the public life. What Lincoln's attitude to such a problem would have been, it is difficult to say. But we know his hatred and abhorrence of the anti-social spirit of "money"; we can almost hear him asking Governor Curtin, in one of his more petulant moments, "What do you think of those fellows in Wall Street who are gambling in gold at such a time as this?" And how, bringing his fist down angrily, he himself replied, "For my part, I wish every one of them had his devilish head shot off."

He returned to Washington, and there received the



news of Lee's surrender to Grant. On the evening of the 11th, in response to the calls of a large crowd which had gathered about the White House, the President gave utterance to the thankfulness that filled his heart.

And there and then he set forth before his hearers the policy of Southern Reconstruction which he had inaugurated and now proposed to follow. It was based upon the principal of beginning at once with any available element of loyalty in a state, of moulding that, and of building upon it. He had been bitterly criticised for his policy in Louisiana. "Concede," he said quaintly, "that the new Government of Louisiana is only, to what it should be, as the egg is to the fowl, we shall sooner have the fowl by hatching the egg than by smashing it." Every state should be reconstructed on this principle, but on no inflexible plan. Beyond all this, he seemed to hold some scheme in reserve. "It may be my duty," he said, "to make some new announcement to the people of the South. I am considering, and shall not fail to act when satisfied that action will be proper."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I have purposely omitted any lengthy discussion of Lincoln's reconstruction work, important as it undoubtedly was. It met with powerful and successful opposition at the time from many quarters and notably from Sumner, who had great power in the country, and practically defeated the president's purposes for Louisiana, in the Senate. After Lincoln's death his policy was wrecked by the temper both of his successor and of the Northern and Southern parties; and the reconstruction of the South was pushed through on lines very different from those sketched out by Lincoln. Sumner and Lincoln who were close friends in 1865 differed radically upon the question of negro-enfranchisement; the latter with his practical wisdom always standing out against the general suffrage advocated by Sumner and the more doctrinaire Republicans. Lincoln would bring moral pressure to bear on the reconstructed States to

Those were the last words of his last public speech; they were full of reconciliation. He was intended *par excellence*, for a peace-maker: but he was not to be permitted to play his part. For another actor, and one of the third-rank only, prompted by the insanity of egoism seizing upon a confused aspiration for the fame of a tyrannicide, thrust in here to prevent him. After four years of anxiety, the nation was giving itself up to rejoicing, when the news of his dastardly deed, struck to its heart and took away its breath. It was on the evening of Good Friday, the 14th of April, and the fourth anniversary of the fall of Sumter, that the President was assassinated.

Only the night before he had had a dream, which he said, had come to him on several previous occasions, to foretell some great event of happy augury. He had found himself in "a singular and indescribable vessel . . . moving with great rapidity toward a dark and indefinite shore." He told this dream gravely to the Cabinet at its morning meeting, supposing that it had reference to Sherman's closing campaign against Johnston; and then turning to business dismissed it. But some time earlier he had had another dream which it had been less easy to dismiss, and which had haunted him.

He had gone to bed late after an anxious day. In

secure votes for the few very intelligent negroes, and for those who had fought for the Union; but he was against negro-franchise.

He was the man best fitted for aiding to reconstruct the South. Trusted in the North, respected even in the South, idolised by the negroes, he would have so acted as to unite, not to divide national feeling. He would have acted in accordance with his saying, "I cannot go forward with everybody opposed to me.—*Cp.* J. F. Rhodes, *History of U.S.*, vol. v.

his sleep he had seemed to be surrounded by a death-like stillness, broken presently by a sound, as of a multitude weeping. The mourners, however, were invisible. He had seemed to wander on from room to familiar room, everything plainly visible save the source of those continual sobbings. He had become more and more perplexed and alarmed, till, in his dream, he came to the East Room. There lay a corpse under a catafalque, surrounded by a guard of soldiers, and about them a great throng of mourners. "Who is dead?" he had asked the guard. "The President," answered one of them, "he was killed by an assassin!"—and the groan that burst from the mourners had wakened him.

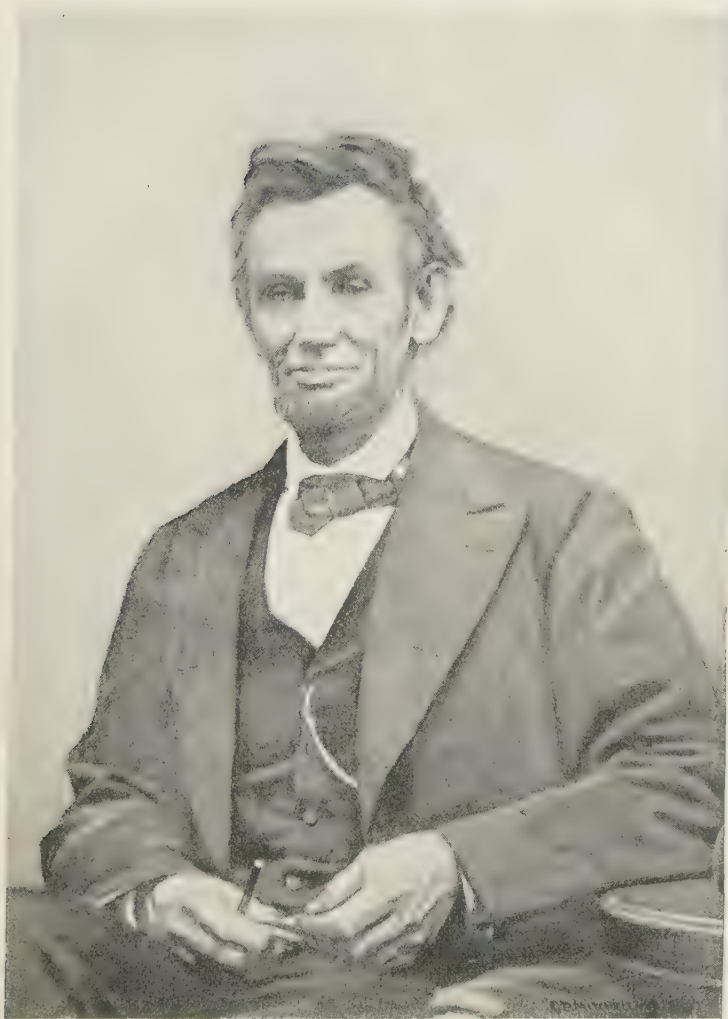
Mrs Lincoln, who seems to have suffered already from the initial stages of the mental malady which afterwards wrecked her life and reason, was morbidly subject to premonitions of evil. She had long anticipated some dreadful end to her husband's career, and many a trifling incident had brought her mind back to its fears. How much more painfully must such a strangely vivid dream as this, have affected her!

She must, moreover, have noted with anxiety the change that the last year had wrought in him. It was not merely that, as Tad said afterwards, he had never been happy since he came to Washington;—but that he had begun to age very fast. His expression of sadness had become more and more poignant, so that it drew tears from sympathetic observers. His boisterous, boyish laughter was now but rarely heard. By constant abstraction and inward meditation, his eyes seem to be veiled, so that they should not trouble with external impressions, that concentra-



Allow Mr. Ashmun  
& friends to come in  
at 9 - A.M. to mor-  
row -

A. Lincoln  
April 14. 1865.



LINCOLN, APRIL 9, 1865.





tion of thought which his task demanded. Month by month, as Mr Hay has noted, he was more enwrapped in solitude, more detached from his immediate surroundings, more alone in his "all-sufficing strength."

But on that last day he himself was especially happy, genial and light-hearted. At the Cabinet-meeting he would hear of nothing but amnesty and reconciliation. The late "rebels" were once more "our fellow-citizens." As for their leaders, the mischief-makers, he would contrive to scare them away without hurting them. War Secretary Stanton noted that he had never before seen him so cheerful.

But this very light-heartedness frightened his poor wife. As he drove out with her through the freshness of that early spring he talked of the future, of the money he was contriving to save during his presidency, and of their ultimate return to Illinois and quiet. And still the woman at his side was haunted by vague fears; somehow his gaiety brought back to her a tragic memory. He had been like this just before Willie died.

They came back to the White House, and there he found a group of old friends with whom he spent a merry hour or two before dinner. Dinner over, he tore himself reluctantly away, and went with Mrs Lincoln and two others to the theatre—Americans not being accustomed to observe Good Friday in the more serious English fashion. He gave himself up to the farce upon the boards, laughing and talking between the acts with that boyish irresponsibility, that holiday abandonment of care, which made him in such moods the most delightful of companions.

Upon that scene unheralded, entered Death.

Somewhere in the theatre, about half-past ten o'clock, people heard a sharp pistol shot. It was followed by a sudden momentary struggle between two men in the President's box, a heavy leap on to the stage, a man flourishing a red dagger as he shouted *Sic semper tyrannis!* and turned to limp hurriedly across it, and a woman's cry, "He has killed the President!" Then chaos let loose through all the house.

The bullet had gone to its mark, and the President never recovered consciousness. He was carried to a small lodging house near by, and there died between seven and eight o'clock in the morning of the 15th, aged fifty-six. Stanton was among those who watched beside him, and his words seemed fitly to close the scene: "Now he belongs to the ages."

They wrapped the body of Abraham Lincoln in the Stars and Stripes and carried it to the White House.

That body had suddenly become sacramental in its significance. The whole population of the Northern States seemed to be stunned by the terrible news their papers brought them. Men turned from their work wherever they were, and went silently out into the streets looking into each others faces as though to seek an answer to the riddle of fate. It was only as they began to realise that his insane murder was symbolical of the evil spirit that had struck so fiercely at the nation's life, that they became aware of the tragedy which had overtaken them.

As his body lay peacefully in the Capitol, forgetful of all the bitterness of the long strife—as it was carried in that strange triumphal progress through the States to its resting-place at Springfield—the people

seemed to understand the man who had understood them, whom death had given back to them. And even in the South, through which that body did not pass, there were many black men and women and at least some white, who knew that the abhorred act of the assassin had robbed them of their best friend.

Lincoln's death shrouded from the gaze of America her glowing vision of an equal-handed justice ushering in immediate reconciliation and true peace. Perhaps that vision had been his rather than hers. Men found it hard to learn that "word over all, beautiful as the sky." He passed, and peace came on but slowly.

Yet not slowly perhaps to him. If the dead face can tell anything, the face of Lincoln told beyond all question that the struggle, too heavy to be borne, was finished, the warfare accomplished, the Peace-maker come.

The cares of the President were over now; it seemed to the mourners that "old Abe" was come home again.

Once, in a dream, he had seen a great crowd of people, and himself passing through it. They had made way for him, but he heard one say scornfully, "He's a common-looking fellow." "Friend," retorted Lincoln, "the Lord prefers common-looking people; that is why He made so many of them."

The story needs no comment. With all his consciousness of great powers entrusted to him, and a great destiny before him, Lincoln had never forgotten he was one of the common people. He had been their leader, but never as one that separated himself from them. Though he had been their leader, there was a sense in which he had never "risen out of the

ranks." In spirit he had always been fighting and suffering alongside, his lot inseparable from theirs.

So now, having accomplished the great task they had entrusted to him, he came back to dwell forever among his own folk, whom he loved.

"This dust was once the man

Gentle, plain, just and resolute, under whose cautious hand,  
Against the foulest crime in history, known in any land or age,  
Was saved the Union of these States."

## Chapter XIII

### Conclusions

Reception of the news of Lincoln's Death—Lincoln's views of Providence and Religion—Of Government and Labour—The Paradox of his Personality.

IT is always more prudent to delay one's praise of a great man till after he is dead : for so long as his life lasts, there is a danger lest that incalculable element of greatness which is in him should too obviously transcend the categories of our approval, and so commit us to an admiration we had not intended. But once the last digit of his acts is set down and the line of death has been drawn across the foot of the account, it does not seem so difficult to compute its total, nor so hazardous to strike the balance.

Even to the end, Abraham Lincoln puzzled his contemporaries. There were indeed many who always loved, admired or revered him, and many who consistently distrusted and disliked the man and his policy. But there were also very many who were perplexed ; whose attitude toward the President was alternately one of praise and blame, of confidence and suspicion. Because of the singularity of his character, and the stress of the times, it was but natural that the feeling of anxiety should often have outweighed all else in men's thoughts. But on two occasions America came near to the consciousness of his greatness ; the



first was in the election of 1864, the second was upon his death. It is when a great power, but especially when a unique co-ordinating power, ceases to be exercised that its force is realised, and men begin to estimate its character.

This was notably true in the case of Abraham Lincoln. Once his name was removed from its familiar station in men's minds, once his grasp had slackened on the helm of the ship of state, his value was made poignantly clear by his loss. From that time on, we have been seeking to estimate more precisely the nature of the power he wielded.

The first feeling experienced on hearing the news of his death by all who had even dimly recognised Lincoln's personality was that expressed by Sir George Grey in the House of Commons, when he felicitously declared, "we feel as if some great calamity had befallen ourselves." Whitman's chant, "When lilacs last in the door-yard bloom'd," commemorates this profound and almost universal sentiment of bereavement.

But alongside of this absorbing sorrow, there sprang up the praise of the deceased. He had been tried, and he had not been found wanting. "It cannot be said there was any exaggeration of his worth," Emerson declared: "if ever a man was fairly tested, he was." "Had he not lived long enough to keep the greatest promise that ever man made to his fellow-men—the practical abolition of slavery?" And Frederick Harrison said, and has recently re-affirmed, that Lincoln was "the most beautiful and heroic character who, in recent times has ever led a nation, the only blameless type of the Statesman since the days of Washington."

The mention of that illustrious name recalls a dictum of Lincoln's worth recording here, for the light it throws upon the man himself; it belongs to his years on the eighth circuit.

"Let us believe as in the days of our youth," he said, "that Washington was spotless; it makes human nature better to believe that one human being was perfect—that human perfection is possible." He knew himself far too intimately ever to suppose that he or any biographer of his, could claim so much for him, but "he was a man without vices . . . sound to the core; cheerful, persistent, all right for labour, and liked nothing so well." It was not claimed by Emerson, even in the words quoted; but, using perfection in its finer sense, he would have declared that Lincoln was more complete, more full-grown than other men. He set indeed a nobler standard of human stature before the world; and it was not for nothing that he began his manhood in the land of the Illinois<sup>1</sup> in a society which one of his biographers has aptly described as consisting of "full grown men." In moral stature he led them all. "He was a common man," wrote Joshua Speed, "expanded into giant proportions."

It would be easy to quote many other notable tributes to, and estimates of the man; I cannot here omit reference to two in passing, that of Lowell in his *Ode*, as true to Lincoln as it is happily familiar to all lovers of noble literature, and the verses of generous, if belated recantation in *Punch*. But more appropriate to my present purpose are the words spoken, thirteen years later by Alexander Stephens, once Vice-President

<sup>1</sup> "Illinois" = the full-grown men.

of the Southern Confederacy, on the reception by Congress of F. B. Carpenter's painting of the Signing of the Proclamation. He said, "I knew Mr Lincoln well . . . we were together during the 30th Congress. I was as intimate with him as with any other man of that Congress, except perhaps one [Mr Toombs]. Of Mr Lincoln's general character I need not speak. He was warm-hearted; he was generous; he was magnanimous; he was most truly, as he afterward said on a memorable occasion, with malice toward none, with charity for all! In bodily form he was above the average and so in intellect: the two were in symmetry. Not highly cultivated, he had a native genius far above the average of his fellows. Every fountain of his heart was ever overflowing with the milk of human kindness. So much for him personally. From my attachment to him, so much the deeper was the pang in my own breast as well as of millions, at the manner of his 'taking off.' That was the climax of our troubles, and the spring from which came afterward unnumbered woes." Later in the same address, speaking of the result of the Proclamation, he said finely referring to the part Lincoln had taken in emancipating the slaves, "Life is all a mist and in the dark our fortunes meet us. This was evidently the case with Mr Lincoln."

There is another testimony to the President which has its own special value, that of the negroes, who persisted in identifying him with America on the one hand, and with Providence on the other. They would call him "Uncle Sam," or "Massa Sam"; and again, "de great Messiah," and declare "Massa Linkum, he be eberywhere. He knows eberyting. He walk de earf like de Lord."

Expressions of childlike devotion and reverence such as these, made sometimes in all simplicity to the man himself, never touched his pride, but always his humility. He would say, "You must not give me the praise—it belongs to God;" or, after a silence, pacing his room, "It is a momentous thing to be the instrument, under Providence, of the liberation of a race."

Without dwelling further upon the innumerable testimonies to Lincoln's work and worth, let us consider several passages in which he attempted to express his sense of agency and guidance; for they illustrate, better than could any other words, a side of his personality which needs now to be thrown into greater relief.

The following statement of Lincoln's views is given in the *Recollections* of Mr Lucius E. Chittenden:

"That the Almighty does make use of human agencies, and directly intervenes in human affairs, is one of the plainest statements in the Bible. I have had so many evidences of His direction, so many instances when I have been controlled by some other power than my own will, that I cannot doubt that this power comes from above. I frequently see my way clear to a decision when I am conscious that I have no sufficient facts upon which to found it. But I cannot recall one instance in which I have followed my own judgment, founded upon such a decision, when the results were unsatisfactory. . . . I am satisfied that, when the Almighty wants me to do, or not to do a particular thing, he finds a way of letting me know it."

Continuing, he said—as reported by Mr Chittenden—that his certainty of God did not rest merely on the

authority of the Bible. "No, there is the element of personal experience." But at the same time he did not discount the authority of the Bible. The Bible, as he said, "contains an immense amount of evidence of its own authenticity. . . . I decided long ago that it was less difficult to believe that the Bible was what it claimed to be, than to disbelieve it. . . .

"No man was ever the worse for living according to the directions of the Bible. . . .<sup>1</sup>

"At first, when we had such long spells of bad luck, I used to lose heart sometimes. Now, I seem to know that Providence has protected and will protect us against any fatal defeat. All we have to do is to trust the Almighty, and keep right on obeying His orders and executing His will."

I am, of course, well aware that these sentences, though they have an indisputably authentic ring, are not written by Lincoln's own hand, and that the reminiscences of his friends must be open to verbal criticism. But Mr Chittenden is not alone in his evidence. Mr Carpenter, for instance, who painted the President's portrait in 1864, quotes similar sayings, of which I may give examples :

"I should be the most presumptuous blockhead upon this footstool if I, for one day, thought that I could discharge the duties which have come upon me since I came into this place, without the aid of One who is stronger than all others."

Again : "I am very sure that, if I do not go away from here a wiser man, I shall go away a better man,

<sup>1</sup> In 1864 he wrote to Joshua Speed, "I am profitably engaged reading the Bible. Take all of this book upon reason that you can, and the balance upon faith, and you will live and die a better man."

for having learned here what a very poor sort of a man I am."

Another friend of Lincoln, Mr Whitney, records this saying of the President's: "I have been driven many times upon my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go; my own wisdom, and that of all about me seemed insufficient for that day."

Again, Dr Holland has recorded the following reply made by Lincoln to certain Ministers of the Christian Commission:

"If it were not for my firm belief in an over-ruling Providence it would be difficult for me, in the midst of such complications of affairs, to keep my reason on its seat. But I am confident that the Almighty has His plans, and will work them out; and whether we see it or not, they will be the best for us. I have always taken counsel of Him, and have never adopted a course of proceeding without being assured, as far as I could be, of His approbation."

The quotations we have been considering, while they have special reference to Lincoln's estimate of his own situation, and particularly of his relationship to Providence, illuminate the whole of his religious life. There is no question that, whatever his theology, he practised the mystical duty of prayer by which the active conscious life is fed from the transcendent, or sub-conscious; and that he was possessed of a faith which was the actual substance of the things he hoped for, and the persistent proving of realities not seen.

I think there is a clear evidence too, that one after another, the intellectual difficulties which had hindered the free play of his spiritual faculties, were removed: and that, in his last two years he came very near to



what may best be described as the Quaker position in religious matters. Whether or no the vigorous but reverent Unitarianism of his thought up to that time was actually abandoned, there is not sufficient evidence to decide; and for my part, I am not anxious to define the man's theological position. He himself would have repudiated any such attempt, for he always said, that "the more a man knew of theology, the farther he got away from the spirit of Christ." His affiliation to Quakerism is however worth notice in passing. He had a partiality for the Friends. He used laughingly to say that he was always willing to receive them for he was sure they were not come to ask for offices.<sup>1</sup>

As to his own antecedents, I have noted that he referred to some of his ancestors as "Quakers," in an autobiographical document which contains no reference to any other religious body;<sup>2</sup> such a reference, in 1860—even though inaccurate—bears with it a recognition of its significance in Lincoln's own mind. The mention of only two illustrious Quaker names, those of John Woolman, the tailor of New Jersey, and of John Bright, the cotton spinner of Rochdale, suggest many interesting resemblances in spiritual quality, which might be pursued at length. In the *Journal* of the one, and the *Speeches* of the other, many parallels

<sup>1</sup> By a singular coincidence several of the men whom he had chosen for his political advisers were intimately associated with the Society. War Secretary Stanton's mother was a Quaker Minister, while Bates and Chase were closely connected with Friends, and Halleck, for nearly two years Commander-in-Chief of the Armies of the Republic, was actually in nominal membership in the Quaker body. It is no wonder that the President's advisers were often spoken of derisively as "The Quaker War Cabinet."

<sup>2</sup> Appendix A.

may be found for the great utterances of Abraham Lincoln. He loved the simplicity of the truth ; and lived in it like John Woolman. Like the little poor man of Mount Holly, the St Francis of America, he was a philanthropist because he felt the one-ness of humanity, and knew the sufferings and the joys of other men as his own. He too had caught a vision of Woolman's "prospect"—"one common interest from which our own is inseparable, so that to turn all we possess into the channel of universal love becomes the business of our lives." And much of the reasoning upon unnecessary labour, and the seeds of war contained in *A Word of Remembrance and Caution to the Rich*,<sup>1</sup> might have come almost word for word from the pen of the President.

Again, if any statesmen have held and acted upon the doctrine of Inner Illumination, the cardinal doctrine of Quaker apologetics, they were Abraham Lincoln and John Bright: if any great orators addressed their appeal to the spirit of truth in the hearts of their hearers, it was they. And the words of no other public men in their generation, carried such authority as did theirs.

Finally, Lincoln's mysticism was closely related to that of the Quaker community by its intensely practical, and in the best sense, philanthropic quality. His life was dominated by one supreme ambition ; "die when I may, I want it said of me by those who knew me best, that I always plucked a thistle, and planted a flower—when I thought a flower would grow."

According to the oldest use of the word, he was a

<sup>1</sup> 1793.

pious man : but there was nothing either sanctimonious or negative in his piety. He did his duty, not with an air of conscious virtue, nor yet wholly in the old Roman heroical fashion, but purely because he found the supreme satisfaction of his life in doing it : he did it because it was what he was for. And he expected that others should feel the same. For him, virtue—because it was radical and essential in his being,—was its own reward. To a delegation of the Christian Commission, who had done devoted service in the hospitals and on the battle-fields, he once said with a glowing face that he would no more thank them than they should thank him, or than either should offer their thanks to the soldiers—because they, and he, and those others were, as he thought, simply men who knew that they were fulfilling their duty. In such a mood, in such a man, we see ambition, ethics, and religion, not as three, but as one.

I have already suggested by quoting his references to pro-slavery theology, Lincoln's abhorrence of religious cant. His feeling on this matter is further illustrated by his refusal to attend the discourses of an eminent clergyman, on the grounds that he did not care to listen to expositions of Divine Law from a man who could not be trusted to construe the laws of the State ; and that since his opinion on every day transactions was incompetent, he could not value his advice on more important matters.

It would be easy to fill many pages with further notes upon Lincoln's religion. But that does not now appear necessary. It may be as well, however, to state here that there were many doctrines and positions of the Christian Churches which he could not accept.

His belief in prayer was balanced by his disbelief in miracles, in eternal punishment and original sin : his reverence and love for Jesus, by incredulity as to the doctrines of the Atonement, of the Immaculate Conception, and of the Trinity ; and his acceptance of the Bible was dissociated from any dogma of verbal inspiration. He believed in the Fatherhood of God, and the Brotherhood of Man, and was a firm believer in evolution as the process of amelioration in every field of life. By temperament he was a constitutionalist. And this applied to his religious life. He had never experienced a sudden "change of heart," but was aware of a slow deepening of his nature : and after his election to the Presidency, of a "process of crystallisation." He held that the method of the Almighty was one of natural order, not of supernatural disorder.

But if he was a constitutionalist, he was a radical besides. Always his own priest, he made the fullest use of the revolutionary instrument of prayer, the franchise of the Christian.

Lincoln's religion, while coloured by the thought of his time and long limited by its extreme individualism, developed with his personality. Taken all in all, there is perhaps no more satisfying or characteristic description of it than that which he gave to Herndon, —when he identified it with that of an old countryman in Indiana, who declared, "When I do good, I feel good : and when I do bad, I feel bad : and that's my religion." It was something intuitive in the man : it was directly associated with action ; and it was absolutely personal and direct. So too, in politics : when he discussed government, he was thinking primarily of self-government, the only foundation of

liberty. He was, in the fullest and broadest meaning of the phrase, "a temperance man," because he saw that liberty depends on self-control. It is much more important to emphasise this than to enter into the controversy about his teetotalism. His views of a free government "of the people, for the people, by the people," required men and women capable of liberty. They also required conditions favourable to the development of self-government, and he looked forward to a time when every family should possess its own homestead, subject to no lien other than taxes.<sup>1</sup>

I have said Lincoln was not a Socialist. But he belonged to the same great school as Mill and Mazzini, and like theirs his vigorous individualism was always balanced by the feeling for solidarity. And while many of his political dicta, like those of Walt Whitman, belong to the first half of the Nineteenth Century and have become largely inapplicable in the Twentieth, we can have no doubt that he, who kept so intimate a knowledge of popular needs, and held so august an idea of national duties, would have ever widened his thought in face of the social problems of the age. It was because the politicians who succeeded him were more logical and less wise, more determined and less just, more rigidly, and therefore less democratically Republican than he, because in a word they lacked his imagination, his sympathy for and faith in the people, that his death marks the beginning of so tragical a period in the story of America.

In the course of the preceding pages we have seen how all Lincoln's political theory was built on the corner-stone of Free Labour. Just as in questions of

<sup>1</sup> Browne, ii. 638.

religion, he made the radical demand that it should stand proof and yield sound fruit, so in political dispute he always asked whether this measure debated would encourage or hinder honest labour, and whether it would render to the workman or hold back from him the fruits of his labour. Every question he was called on to consider, from tariffs to annexation, was thus transformed into the labour question. And as Phillips Brooks well said, he brought to the solution of that question "not merely a mind, but a body thoroughly in sympathy with labour, full of the culture of labour, bearing witness to the dignity and excellence of work in every muscle that work had toughened and every sense that work had made clear and true."

Most men of the people who come to hold high office, become separated by such office from their great birth right of the common life.

As we have seen this was not true of Lincoln. He remained always a free and independent working man, and, whatever his circumstances, the life of the workers always remained his own life. He knew of no condition more desirable than theirs, if only it could be freed from the burdens of social injustice: his one political purpose was to help in securing, enlarging, and extending its privileges. He hated the advent of "money" as an inhuman power in American politics: he knew that as it had divided men in the past, so it must always in the future separate its agents and minions from the common-life, and create schisms therein. He knew that the social sanctions which permitted any part of the community to live without labour upon the labour of others, were sanctions favourable to slavery, and hostile to his America.



For him, Labour was the antiseptic of social life. "If ever this free people—this Government—is utterly demoralised" he used to say, "it will come from this human struggle for office—a way to live without work."

Lincoln's America has already in half a century passed out of our knowledge into the lands of legend. Where Cotton once was King now the Corporation rules; and the black slavery of the plantation has given partial place to the industrial white slavery of men, women and little children, both North and South. The desperate struggle, the heroic national Labour of the Civil War for the illegalisation of negro slavery, has not been enough to destroy that Old Dragon the enemy of Freedom; Liberty must indeed be won anew by each generation. To-day, as yesterday, America continues to divide her allegiance between God and Mammon, and to endanger that spiritual life of the Republic which is still, as it was when Lincoln loved it, "The last, best hope of man."

Is her soil yet to be the battlefield of the great Armageddon of Labour, which men await with mingled hope and terror? It may well be; for too much faith in freedom, too much aspiration after justice, too much love and goodwill have gone to the making of America, to remain subservient to those powers of re-action and tyranny which now menace her life, endeavouring to reduce labour there to the condition which it has too long endured in Europe. If such a struggle should be in store for America, the lovers of liberty in every land will pray that a leader may be raised up as tender and as true as was Abraham Lincoln.

By what steps he came to his manhood's full stature, I have attempted to tell. "The beauty of his character was its entire simplicity. He had no affectation in anything. True to nature, true to himself, he was true to everybody and everything around him. When he was ignorant on any subject, no matter how simple it might make him appear, he was always willing to acknowledge it." "His whole aim in life was to be true to himself." So wrote Joshua Speed. Another friend has summed up his political success as succinctly: "His tactics were to get himself in [to] the right place, and remain there, still, until events would find him in that place."<sup>1</sup>

"He seems to have been a man of indomitable firmness (even obstinacy) on rare occasions, involving great points," wrote Walt Whitman; "but he was generally very easy, flexible, tolerant almost slouchy, respecting minor matters. I note that even those reports and anecdotes intended to level him down, all leave the tinge of a favourable impression of him. As to his religious nature, it seems to me to have certainly been of the amplest, deepest rooted, loftiest kind."

I have rarely in these pages attempted to find parallels for Lincoln, or to compare him with other men. I am inclined to think that such comparisons are apt to prove misleading; but I seem to see him in company with three figures, half illustrious, half grotesque, walking the wide fields of romance. There is Socrates, the relentless reasoner, the lover of men, with his ugly face and beautiful mystic soul, that soul that was the flower of the Greek world: there

<sup>1</sup> Leonard Swett, in *Herndon & Weik*.

too is the chivalrous, pathetic, ridiculous, Knight of La Mancha, whose thin tall shadow still seems to point with heroic menace at every foe of his great dreams : and with them another and a humbler figure, stricken in years, but with the heart of a child, " Uncle Remus," the teller of tales. Whether they are of history or of romance, those three, it is hard to tell ; but there can be no doubt of this fourth figure that is with them. He is, indeed, as strangely romantic as any but his title to humanity is beyond question.

A man without vices, even in his youth, but full even in ripe age of the sap of virility—the sweet and the stern experiences of life changed him in many ways with the long years, but left him still unlike all others, left him still accessible to all, spontaneously responsive. Happy the nation which in its great need, dared to trust to such a man its fortunes !

I referred at the beginning of this volume to the fascination of Lincoln's personality. That fascination arises, as I think, from a sort of contradiction or paradox of which one is always sensible whenever one touches it. It often reminds one of Dickens, in whom, to quote his latest biographer, uncommon sensibility was mixed with common sense. But Lincoln's is not only one of those tragi-comic characters which are in themselves so rich in human suggestion : it is besides that of a logician who was never able to divorce his reasoning faculty from his humanity. In a word he was a man in whom the contradictions of lesser types were reconciled but not wholly obliterated. And it is the men who have, as it were, stretched our human nature to include in their one personality elements we have by common

consent regarded hitherto as incompatible, that attract and hold our attention. It is not merely that Lincoln, born in a log cabin became the autocrat of the White House; such a story was not unprecedented in America, it is a recurring romance all through history; it is not even that the uncrowned ruler of a continent whose eyes beheld as in a mystical vision the Union of its States, should finish a conversation sitting nonchalantly on some door-step in his capital, or should turn immediately from the crackling pages of a second-rate humorist to that which he regarded as the most sacred and solemn act of his life: it is not these striking but superficial anomalies which hold us, as we consider the man, but something always more subtle, essential and inexplicable. He had imbibed the spirit of action, had lived in its atmosphere all his days, and yet stood always as it were a step or two aloof from it. He always loafed a little, even in the press of affairs, not only that he might reason with himself about causes and results, but often that he might recall a story illustrating some aspect of events, which seemed to others trivial or irrelevant. Almost diffuse in his emotionality, he was perhaps the most cautious man of his time. Nearly always pleasant and ready to converse, without the appearance of secretiveness, and often saying "helplessly natural and naïve things," as astute critics observed; there was yet none of his critics nor even of his intimates who fathomed the President's reserve, which was deeper than a well.

The story of his life is one of great difficulties greatly overcome, yet the fact which remains most impressive of all perhaps, is the unobtrusiveness, the

docility, of a personality so complex and powerful. His earlier story is marred by the struggles of a sensitive nature against coarser ones, with outbreaks of occasional brutality overwhelmed in subsequent shame. He was hungry for love, but was proud and self absorbed. Till he met Speed, he had hardly known a real companion. His very ability was constantly bringing him into social conditions more and more unbearable to an unconventional and spontaneous genius, born and nourished on the frontier. The provincial society of the Edwards group at Springfield stifled and confused him. But his destiny urged him on. He was hardly to know personal happiness, or any full measure of understanding. Thus there were all the conditions present for the production of an obtrusive, irritable, aggressive personality, capricious, moody and tyrannous. If these qualities were ever noticeable in Lincoln, they only served to remind the more acute observer how well he had learned the first lesson of political economy, to know and rule himself. But to most observers they had become invisible. He had integrated a complex and contradictory nature by devotion to duty ; and that devotion led him on from conquest to conquest, till untried, unmeasured forces became the man's auxiliars. Thus he stands up before us all, erect but stooping a little, rapt in thought, with kind, sad, strong, inscrutable face.

## APPENDICES

Lincoln's Autobiography — Lincoln's Mother — Letter to Mrs O. H. Browning—Three contemporary descriptions of President Lincoln.

### APPENDIX A

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOTES WRITTEN BY LINCOLN FOR J. W. FELL, DECEMBER 1859.

I WAS born February 12, 1809, in Hardin county, Kentucky. My parents were both born in Virginia, of undistinguished families—second families, perhaps I should say. My mother, who died in my tenth year, was of a family of the name of Hanks, some of whom now reside in Adams, and others in Macon county, Illinois. My paternal grandfather, Abraham Lincoln, emigrated from Rockingham county, Virginia, to Kentucky about 1781 or 1782, where a year or two later he was killed by the Indians, not in battle, but by stealth, when he was labouring to open a farm in the forest. His ancestors, who were Quakers, went to Virginia from Berks county, Pennsylvania. An effort to identify them with the New England family of the same name ended in nothing more definite than a similarity of Christian names in both families, such as Enoch, Levi, Mordecai, Solomon, Abraham, and the like.

My father, at the death of his father, was but six years of age, and he grew up literally without education. He removed from Kentucky to what is now Spencer county, Indiana, in my eighth year. We reached our new home about the time the State came into the Union. It was a wild region, with many bears and other wild animals still in the woods. There I grew up. There were some schools, so called, but no qualification was ever required of a teacher



beyond "readin', writin', and cipherin'" to the rule of three. If a straggler, supposed to understand Latin happened to sojourn in the neighbourhood he was looked upon as a wizard. There was absolutely nothing to excite ambition for education. Of course, when I came of age I did not know much. Still, somehow, I could read, write, and cipher to the rule of three, but that was all. I have not been to school since. The little advance I now have upon this store of education I have picked up from time to time under the pressure of necessity.

I was raised to farm work, which I continued till I was twenty-two. At twenty-one I came to Illinois, Macon county. Then I got to New Salem, at that time in Sangamon, now in Menard county, where I remained a year as a sort of clerk in a store. Then came the Black Hawk war, and I was elected a captain of volunteers, a success which gave me more pleasure than any I have had since. I went the campaign, was elated, ran for the legislature the same year (1832) and was beaten—the only time I ever have been beaten by the people. The next and three succeeding biennial elections I was elected to the legislature. I was not a candidate afterward. During this legislative period I had studied law and removed to Springfield to practise it. In 1846 I was once elected to the lower House of Congress. Was not a candidate for re-election. From 1849 to 1854, both inclusive, practised law more assiduously than ever before. Always a Whig in politics, and generally on the Whig electoral tickets, making active canvasses. I was losing interest in politics when the repeal of the Missouri compromise aroused me again. What I have done since then is pretty well known.

If any personal description of me is thought desirable it may be said I am, in height, six feet four inches, nearly; lean in flesh, weighing on an average one hundred and eighty pounds; dark complexion, with coarse black hair and gray eyes. No other marks or brands recollected.

## APPENDIX B

WITHOUT overburdening ourselves with discussion, it will be as well briefly to state the difficulty.

One of Lincoln's most intimate friends, his law-partner and biographer, William H. Herndon, published apparently in good faith, the following statement at the beginning of his *Life of Lincoln*: "It was about 1850" he says, "when he [Abraham Lincoln] and I were driving in his one-horse buggy to the Court in Menard County, Illinois. The suit we were to try was one in which we were likely, either directly or collaterally to touch upon the subject of hereditary traits. During the ride he spoke for the first time in my hearing [they must then have been acquainted for at least ten years and in daily intercourse for seven] of his mother, dwelling on her characteristics, and mentioning or enumerating what qualities he inherited from her. He said among other things, that she was the illegitimate daughter of Lucy Hanks and a well bred Virginia farmer or planter; and he argued that from this last source came his power of analysis, his logic, his mental activity, his ambition, and all the qualities that distinguished him from the other members of the Hanks family. His theory in discussing the matter of hereditary traits had been that for certain reasons, illegitimate children are oftentimes sturdier and brighter than those born in lawful wedlock, and in his case, he believed that his better nature and finer qualities came from this broad-minded unknown Virginian. The revelation—painful as it was—called up the recollection of his mother, and, as the buggy jolted over the road, he added ruefully, "God bless my mother; all that I am or ever hope to be I owe to her," and immediately lapsed into silence . . . His words and melancholy tone, made a deep impression on me. It was an experience I can never forget." (pp. 3-4. *Herndon & Weik*).

The statement, though doubtless coloured a little by Herndon's memory, would appear to be genuine, and as such must be taken as evidence that Lincoln supposed his mother

to have been an illegitimate child, and that any genius which he possessed was in some way connected with this fact. Even if he were in error, it is plain that Lincoln, if he said the words accredited to him, was far from casting a slur upon his mother's character. To an intimate friend he disclosed a fact which, understood as he understood it, seemed to him full of significance in his own history, but a fact which if it became public property would have been hawked at by politicians for their own ends, and explained by everyone in accordance with some personal prejudice. I am not prepared to repudiate Herndon's story; but, on the other hand, it would seem as though the break with the past, which occurred, in the case both of the Lincolns and the Hankses, towards the end of the eighteenth century, together with the plausible garrulity of the illegitimate Dennis Hanks, may have deceived Lincoln himself and given, even in his clear mind, a false colour to the real story.

## APPENDIX C

LETTER FROM A. LINCOLN TO MRS. O.H. BROWNING.

WRITTEN AT SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS, 1 APRIL 1838.

DEAR MADAM.—Without apologising for being egotistical, I shall make the history of so much of my life as has elapsed since I saw you the subject of this letter. And, by the way, I now discover that in order to give a full and intelligible account of the things I have done and suffered since I saw you, I shall necessarily have to relate some that happened before.

It was, then, in the autumn of 1836 that a married lady of my acquaintance, and who was a great friend of mine, being about to pay a visit to her father and other relatives residing in Kentucky, proposed to me that on her return she would bring a sister of hers with her on condition that I would engage to become her brother-in-law with all convenient despatch. I, of course, accepted the proposal, for you know I could not have done otherwise had I really been averse to it; but privately, between you and me, I was most

confoundedly well pleased with the project. I had seen the said sister some three years before, thought her intelligent and agreeable, and saw no good objection to plodding life through hand in hand with her. Time passed on, the lady took her journey, and in due time returned, sister in company, sure enough. This astonished me a little, for it appeared to me that her coming so readily showed that she was a trifle too willing, but on reflection it occurred to me that she might have been prevailed on by her married sister to come, without anything concerning me ever having been mentioned to her, and so I concluded that if no other objection presented itself, I would consent to waive this. All this occurred to me on hearing of her arrival in the neighbourhood—for, be it remembered, I had not yet seen her, except about three years previous, as above mentioned. In a few days we had an interview, and, although I had seen her before, she did not look as my imagination had pictured her. I knew she was over-size, but she now appeared a fair match for Falstaff. I knew she was called an “old maid,” and I felt no doubt of the truth of at least half of the appellation, but now, when I beheld her, I could not for my life avoid thinking of my mother; and this, not from withered features,—for her skin was too full of fat to permit of its contracting into wrinkles,—but from her want of teeth, weather-beaten appearance in general, and from a kind of notion that ran in my head that nothing could have commenced at the size of infancy and reached her present bulk in less than thirty-five or forty years; and, in short, I was not at all pleased with her. But what could I do? I had told her sister that I would take her for better or for worse, and I made a point of honor and conscience in all things to stick to my word, especially if others had been induced to act on it, which in this case I had no doubt they had, for I was now fairly convinced that no other man on earth would have her, and hence the conclusion that they were bent on holding me to my bargain. “Well,” thought I, “I have said it, and, be the consequences what they may, it shall not be my fault if I fail to do it.” At once I determined to consider her my

wife, and this done, all my powers of discovery were put to work in search of perfections in her which might be fairly set off against her defects. I tried to imagine her handsome, which, but for her unfortunate corpulency, was actually true. Exclusive of this, no woman that I have ever seen has a finer face. I also tried to convince myself that the mind was much more to be valued than the person, and in this she was not inferior, as I could discover, to any with whom I had been acquainted.

Shortly after this, without attempting to come to any positive understanding with her, I set out for Vandalia, when and where you first saw me. During my stay there I had letters from her which did not change my opinion of either her intellect or intention, but, on the contrary, confirmed it in both.

All this while, although I was fixed "firm as the surger-repelling rock" in my resolution, I found I was continually repenting the rashness which had led me to make it. Through life I have been in no bondage, either real or imaginary, from the thralldom of which I so much desired to be free. After my return home I saw nothing to change my opinion of her in any particular. She was the same, and so was I. I now spent my time in planning how I might get along in life after my contemplated change of circumstances should have taken place, and how I might procrastinate the evil day for a time, which I really dreaded as much, perhaps more, than an Irishman does the halter.

After all my sufferings upon this deeply interesting subject, here I am, wholly, unexpectedly, completely out of the "scrape," and I now want to know if you can guess how I got out of it—out, clear, in every sense of the term—no violation of word, honour, or conscience. I don't believe you can guess, and so I might as well tell you at once. As the lawyer says, it was done in the manner following, to wit: After I had delayed the matter as long as I thought I could in honor do (which, by the way, had brought me round into the last fall), I concluded I might as well bring it to a consummation without further delay, and so I mustered my

resolution and made the proposal to her direct ; but, shocking to relate, she answered, No. At first I supposed she did it through an affectation of modesty, which I thought but ill became her under the peculiar circumstances of her case, but on my renewal of the charge I found she repelled it with greater firmness than before. I tried it again and again, but with the same success, or rather with the same want of success.

I finally was forced to give it up, at which I very unexpectedly found myself mortified almost beyond endurance. I was mortified, it seemed to me, in a hundred different ways. My vanity was deeply wounded by the reflection that I had so long been too stupid to discover her intentions, and at the same time never doubting that I understood them perfectly ; and also that she, whom I had taught myself to believe nobody else would have, had actually rejected me with all my fancied greatness. And, to cap the whole, I then for the first time began to suspect that I was really a little in love with her. But let it all go ! I'll try and outlive it. Others have been made fools of by the girls, but this can never with truth be said of me. I most emphatically, in this instance, made a fool of myself. I have now come to the conclusion never again to think of marrying, and for this reason—I can never be satisfied with any one who would be blockhead enough to have me.

When you receive this, write me a long yarn about something to amuse me. Give my respects to Mr Browning.  
—Your sincere friend,

A. LINCOLN.

In contrast to this letter I may add an extract from one of much later date from Miss Owens in which she told Herndon how Lincoln was crossing a prairie one day and saw before him a hog mired down. He was rather fixed up ; and he resolved that he would pass on without looking at the shoat. After he had gone by he said " The feeling was irresistible, and he had to look back, and the poor thing seemed to say, ' There now, my last hope is gone ! ' that he deliberately got down and relieved it from its difficulty." *Herndon & Weik.*



## APPENDIX D

There are three descriptions of Lincoln's appearance during the first months of his stay in Washington which seem worth quoting at greater length than was advisable in the text.

Mr Edward Dicey wrote to *The Spectator* that when you have called the President "honest Abe Lincoln," you have "said all that can be said in his favour." He represents him as the English stock caricature of the typical Yankee : and proceeds "To say that he is ugly is nothing ; to add that his figure is grotesque, is to convey no adequate impression. Fancy a man 6 feet high and thin, out of proportion, with long, bony arms and legs, which, somehow, seem to be always in the way, with large rugged hands which grasp you like a vice when shaking yours, with a long scraggy neck, and a chest too narrow for the great arms hanging by his side ; add to this figure, a head, cocoanut shaped and somewhat too small for such a stature, covered with rough uncombed and uncombable lank dark hair, that stands out in every direction at once ; a face furrowed, wrinkled and indented as tho' it had been scarred by vitriol ; a high narrow forehead, and sunk deep beneath bushy eyebrows, two bright, somewhat dreamy eyes, that seemed to gaze through you without looking at you ; a few irregular blotches of black, bristly hair in the place where beard and whiskers ought to grow ; a close set, thin lipped stern mouth, with two rows of large white teeth ; and a nose and ears, which have been taken by mistake from a head of twice the size. Clothe this figure, then, in a long, tight, badly fitting suit of black, creased, soiled and puckered up at every salient point of the figure—and every point of this figure is salient—put on large, ill-fitting boots, gloves too long for the long bony fingers, and a fluffy hat, covered to the top with dusty, puffy crape ; and then add to all this an air of strength, physical as well as moral, and a strange look of dignity coupled with all this grotesqueness, and you will have the impression left upon me by Abraham Lincoln. You would never say he was a

gentleman. You would still less say he was not one . . . there are men to whom the epithet . . . appears utterly incongruous and of such the President is one. Still there is about him a complete lack of pretension, and an evident desire to be courteous to everybody, which is the essence if not the outward form of high-breeding. There is a softness too, about his smile, and a sparkle of dry humour about his eye, which redeem the expression of his face and remind one more of the late Dr Arnold, as a child's recollection recalls him to me, than any other face I can call to memory. . . . He is a humourist, not a buffoon . . .”—*Six months in the Federal States*. E. Dicey. 2 vols., 1863.

The able correspondent of the *Times* thus described his first impression :—

“ There entered, with a shambling, loose, irregular, almost unsteady gait, a tall, lank, lean man, considerably over six feet in height, with stooping shoulders, long, pendulous arms, terminating in hands of extraordinary dimensions, which, however, were far exceeded in proportion by his feet. He was dressed in an ill-fitting, wrinkled suit of black, which put one in mind of an undertaker's uniform at a funeral ; round his neck a rope of black silk was knotted in a large bulb, with flying ends projecting beyond the collar of his coat ; his turned-down shirt-collar disclosed a sinewy muscular yellow neck, and above that, nestling in a great black mass of hair, bristling and compact like a mass of mourning pins, rose the strange quaint face and head, covered with its thatch of wild republican hair, of President Lincoln. The impression produced by the size of his extremities, and by his flapping and wide-projecting ears, may be removed by the appearance of kindliness, sagacity, and the awkward bonhomie of his face ; the mouth is absolutely prodigious ; the lips, straggling and extending almost from one line of black beard to the other, are only kept in order by two deep furrows from the nostril to the chin ; the nose itself—a prominent organ—stands out from the face with an inquiring, anxious air, as though it were sniffing for some good thing in the

wind ; the eyes, dark, full, and deeply set, are penetrating but full of an expression which almost amounts to tenderness ; and above them projects the shaggy brow, running into the small hard frontal space, the development of which can scarcely be estimated accurately, owing to the irregular flocks of thick hair carelessly brushed across it. One would say that, although the mouth was made to enjoy a joke, it could also utter the severest sentence which the head could dictate, but that Mr Lincoln would be ever more willing to temper justice with mercy, and to enjoy what he considers the amenities of life, than to take a harsh view of men's nature and of the world, and to estimate things in an ascetic or puritan spirit . . ."—*My Diary North and South* (under date of 27th Mar. 1861), by SIR W. H. RUSSELL.

An able American writer and politician of Southern family in company with the Secretary of War and ex-Governor Walker of Kansas, visited the President in April 1861, and wrote that Lincoln was "not ungainly in either manner or attitude. . . . As he leaned back in his chair he had an air of unstudied ease, a kind of careless dignity, that well became his station ; and yet there was not a trace of self-consciousness about him. He seemed . . . entirely engrossed in the subject under discussion. He had a large head, covered with coarse dark hair that was thrown carelessly back from a spacious forehead. His features also were large and prominent, the nose heavy and somewhat Roman, the cheeks thin and furrowed, the skin bronzed, the lips full, the mouth wide, but played about by a smile that was very winning. At my first glance he impressed me as a very homely man, for his features were ill assorted and none of them were perfect, but this was before I had seen him smile, or met the glance of his deep-set, dark gray eye,—the deepest, saddest, and yet kindest eye I had ever seen in a human being."—*Personal Recollections of A. L. etc.*, by J. R. GILMORE, 1899.

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